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THE 2016

COLNAGO
IS HERE!

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LOVE THE NEW CLX

HOW TO
RIDE RIGHT!

BAD HABITS ALL
GOOD CYCLISTS
SHOULD SWERVE!

RATED!

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STAFF PICKS

SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE PRODUCTS IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE

CATEYE VELO WIRELESS

PAGE 84

Simplicity is sometimes best and that certainly goes for the Cateye Velo. It's basic but it records everything I really need – speed, time, distance and average speed. It's cheaper than a round of drinks in the King & Queen (*BikesEtc*'s local) and it's easy to swap between bikes. Who needs GPS, eh?

David Kenning, Deputy Editor



VITUS VITESSE EVO

PAGE 88

We lucked out with some great test bikes this month, but this one really stood out for all the right reasons. For your money, you get nearly a complete Ultegra groupset, Mavic Ksyrium wheels and versatile geometry that should make it ideal for the tough sportives my colleagues are threatening to sign me up for in 2016. It's rather smart looking too.

Andrew Sumner, Art Director

VULPINE THERMAL STORM CAP

PAGE 70

Real cyclists wear caps. Fact. But choosing which headwear to pop under your helmet when it's cool is as much about fashion as it is about function. I love this chunky, tangerine-orange number from British label Vulpine. Stylish, warm and hard-wearing, it's the perfect winter warmer.

Joseph Delves, Staff Writer



MINOURA B60 R TURBO TRAINER

PAGE 76

Winter on this great British island means cold, wet and murky weather, which can make cycling outdoors hard work. But there is an alternative... I was impressed by how easy the Minoura was to use and its compact size. I'm looking forward to riding all winter – while catching up on my *Mad Men* box set at the same time!

Susannah Osborne, Writer



ED'S LETTER

One of the beauties of cycling is that it's a sport with very few rules. Unless we're racing, we can ride our bikes where we want, when we want, as far and fast as we want, and with whomever we choose. We are free from the restrictions and regulations that bind other sports. It's all very liberating – right up to the point when our paths cross with him (and it is nearly always a him), the cycling jerk.

He's the guy who won't say hello but is happy to sit on your wheel for miles. He's the guy who cuts you up in the corners. He's the guy who empties his nose without checking behind him first, or who leaves his empty gel wrappers

in the hedgerows. At best he's a nuisance, at worst a danger.

We've all met that guy, but with no rules to govern our sport, there's little we can do other than ensure we don't become like him. That's why cycling has built up its own code of etiquette over the years. Not rules as such, but an unwritten guide for the considerate rider.

That is, it was unwritten until now. With the help of *BikesEtc* readers and a few pro riders, we've produced our own blueprint for cycling etiquette (see p57). You don't have to follow it, but if you choose to ignore cycling etiquette, just remember that you run the risk of turning into that guy.

Pete Muir,
Editorial Director

Pete

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Départ



**COLNAGO CLX
ULTEGRA**

p10

INSIDE



Merckx Eeklo p12



Peter Sagan p12



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Bike care tips p18

10 REASONS WHY THIS BIKE ROCKS!

Born of pure Italian flair and over 60 years' racing pedigree, meet the all-new Colnago CLX

1 IT'S BEAUTIFUL!

Just look at it. As well as this stunning high-gloss black version, it also comes in a gorgeous white (below) that's bound to draw longing looks.

2 IT'S HIGH-TECH!

Although the CLX is Colnago's 'entry level' model, it shares many features with the Italian brand's high-end bikes – the ThreadFit 82.5 durable bottom bracket system, for example, is the same one used in the classic C60 series.

3 IT'LL MAKE YOU A BEAST IN THE SADDLE!

Square chainstays promise greater stiffness and thus make pedalling more efficient, so you should see more of your power transfer to the road.

4 IT COMES IN YOUR SIZE!

It's available in eight frame sizes (42-58cm), so finding a perfect fit is (almost) a given, whether you're tinier than Quintana or lankier than Wiggo.

5 IT'S BUILT FOR SPEED!

Sharing the frame geometry of the thoroughbred pro-level VI-r, and designed to be stiff in all the right places for maximum power transfer, this is a genuine speed machine.

6 IT'S SUPER LIGHT!

Being carbon fibre throughout, even down to the dropouts, helps the frame break the magic 1kg mark at a claimed 950g.

7 IT'S COMFORTABLE!

The narrow 27.2mm seatpost is a nod to endurance riders who'll benefit from the added comfort.

8 IT'S RACE READY!

The frame is UCI approved for road racing. So get out there and race on it!

9 IT'S ADAPTABLE!

It's compatible with electronic groupsets, so ripe for an upgrade when your numbers come up on the lottery.

10 IT'S ENDORSED BY GOD!

Well, sort of. Ernesto Colnago himself made and presented a Colnago bike to Pope John Paul II in 1979 so we reckon this is one bike that'd get a thumbs-up from the big fella upstairs!



COLNAGO CLX ULTEGRA

Price: £3,500
Contact:
windwave.co.uk

Full carbon fibre throughout, even the dropouts, helps keep the frame weight down to 950g



Frame: Monocoque
Carbon with CLX 3.0
Carbon fork

Groupset: Shimano
Ultegra 6800 shifters,
brakes, front and rear
mechs and compact 50/34
chainset, Shimano 105 11-
25 cassette

Bars: Deda Rhm02

Stem: Deda Zero One

Saddle: Selle Italia X1, Alloy

Seatpost: Cix Carbon
(27.2mm)

Wheels: Fulcrum Racing 5

Tyres: Vittoria Rubino, 23c

Weight: 8.06kg (size 56)

Contact: windwave.co.uk



PRICE: £2,700
CONTACT: 2pure.co.uk

EDDY MERCKX EEKLO 70

Go hard or go home

A quick look at the Eddy Merckx Eeklo 70's geometry will tell you this is a head-down, mud-wrestling, hawking-up-your-lungs, Sunday-is-race-day-type bike. While bolt-thru axles might be trendy, they're no use if you need to quickly change wheels mid race, so you won't find them here. You won't miss them either – the frame and fork are stiff enough to track unwaveringly through even the roughest terrain.

Using the same carbon lay-up as Merckx's top road frame, the EMX-525, the humongous bottom bracket area is equally resolute to provide formidable acceleration. An external BB might seem quaint but in the muddy world of cross it'll outlast an equivalent pressfit unit, making it a welcome choice. The mechanical Ultegra groupset is flawless, the brakes providing more power than you'll ever need, and significantly reducing arm fatigue versus less powerful models. All in a bike that'll leave you precious few excuses for failure come the bell lap.

Frame: Monocoque Carbon Fibre front triangle

Groupset: Shimano Ultegra 6800

Brakes: Shimano Ultegra 6800

Bars: Deda Zero 100

Stem: Deda Zero 100

Saddle: Prologo Zero-II T2

Wheels: Shimano WH-RX31

Tyres: Vittoria CG Pro, 31c

Weight: 8.95kg (size 54)

Contact: 2pure.co.uk



Verdict
A great frame with well-chosen components make this a cracking race-ready cyclocross machine



Sagan's white shorts shocker

Slovak World Champ goes a step too far

To celebrate being crowned road race World Champion, Peter Sagan has ditched his team shorts in favour of white ones. The idiosyncratic rules of cycling's regulating body, the UCI, dictate that Sagan is entitled to wear a paler pant to match the rainbow jersey, but someone needs to have a word with the lad.

Sagan, whose out-of-the-saddle attire already appears to be inspired by a bass player from some forgotten '80s electro-funk outfit, will spend next season looking not unlike a Wham-era George Michael.

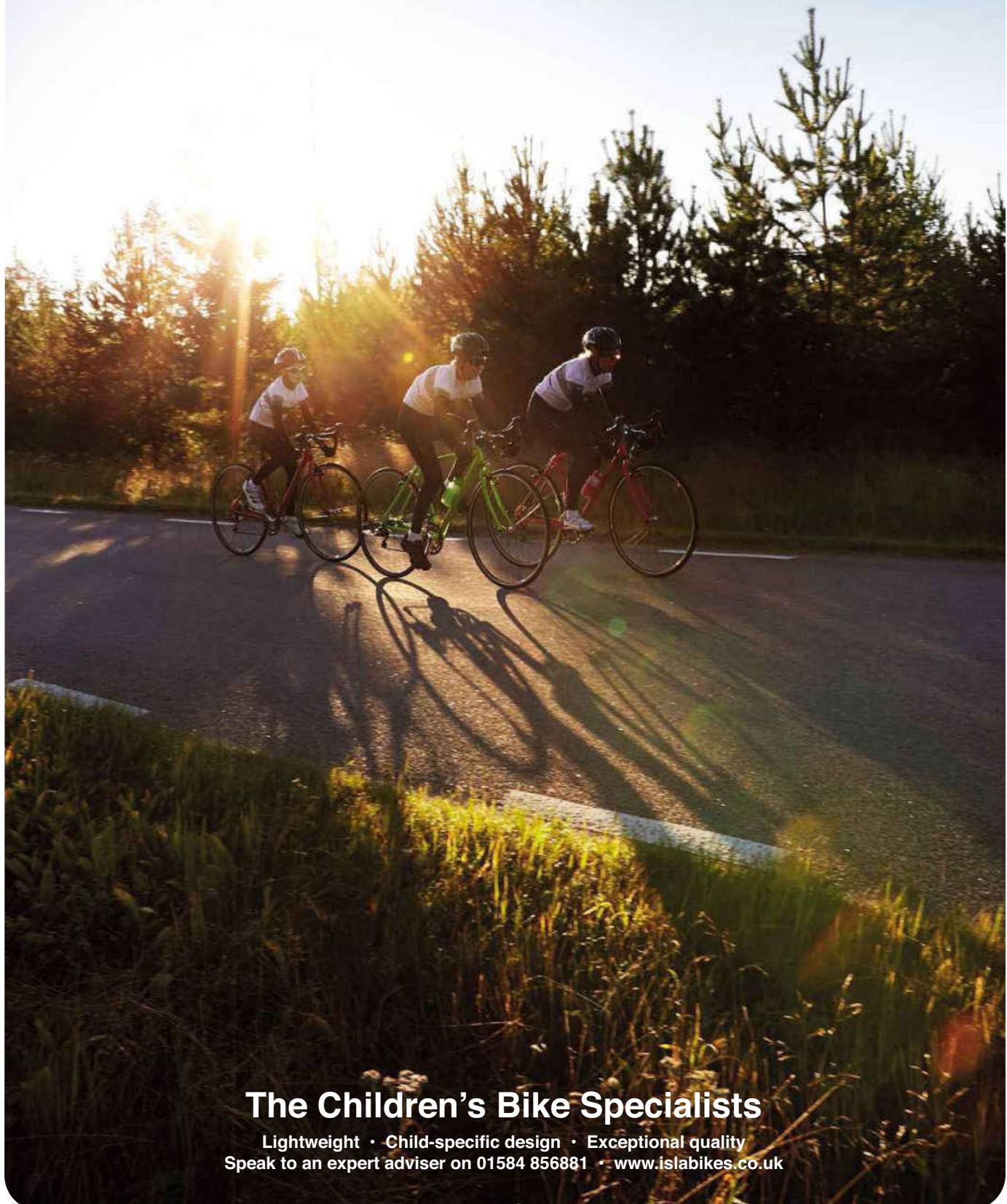
We're not being rude, there is a serious point here. White shorts might look good on a tennis court but are a big no-no for cyclists. As Frank Strack, author of *The Rules* (velominati.com), puts it, 'Looking fantastic on a bike is the whole point.'

Yes, Sagan may look OK in a nice, dry studio, but imagine how see-through those shorts will become on a rainy day in Belgium come the spring Classics. It's not a sight anyone will want to see from behind.

So take heed, gents – when you're in the saddle, keep it simple and keep your shorts black. It'll hide a multitude of sins. Well at least two dangly ones.

→ For more on how to comport yourself as a cyclist, see 'A Gentleman's Guide To The Road', page 57

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CANYON

Bollé The One Road Premium

An integrated helmet system that does the lot!

Bollé has been a presence in pro cycling since the early 90s, and today sponsor the AG2R and Orica-GreenEdge teams. But despite 40 years of making high-quality ski helmets, the French company has never made a cycling lid. Until now.

The One Road Premium is the top-of-the-range road model in a line that includes MTB and commuter helmets, and Bollé has cleverly applied its ski know-how to make a helmet that solves some of the issues faced by cyclists. Like where to put

your sunnies and how to be more visible at night.

With 31 vents, it's a good bet for hot heads but on days when you're more concerned with speed, there's a two-piece clip-on aero shell. A touch-sensitive LED light clicks into the rear for night-time riding and we loved the 'sunglasses garage' to neatly park your specs.

Available in 54-58cm and 58-62cm sizes, the Click-to-Fit system gives a good fit, although we found the larger model a tad on the, erm, large side.



PRICE:

£109

CONTACT:

bolle-europe.co.uk

Verdict

This is a really well thought-out, good-looking helmet that really does seem to do it all.

Q&A

Q I recently came off my bike and hit my head. I can't see any damage to my helmet but should I get a new one anyway?
Wayne Tully, Faversham

A Paul Caswell, Brand Manager for Giro helmets, says:

Of course! Even if you can't see damage, the helmet will have absorbed the energy of an impact.

Cycling helmets are constructed from hundreds of plastic pellets of expanded polystyrene (EPS). These are moulded under heat and pressure and an impact can cause the pellets to separate inside the helmet, though it's unlikely that you'll be able to see damage. What's more, an impact to the left-hand side of a helmet can result in damage on the opposite side as the energy radiates through the structure.

Most helmet makers have a crash replacement policy, so if you damage your helmet you can buy a new one at discount. Giro offers 50% off the cost of a replacement – see zyro.co.uk for details.

SMART LIGHTS

Intelligent illuminators that are making the roads a safer place



SEE.SENSE ICON

RUN TIME: 12 hours

COST: rear £65, front & rear set £120
CONTACT: seesense.co

GARMIN VARIA

RUN TIME: front 2.5 hours, rear 4 hours (high power mode)

COST: £240 (front & rear light set); £160 Rearview Radar
CONTACT: buy.garmin.com

When is a light not a light? When it's an intelligent, motion-sensing warning system that responds to what's happening on the road around you, that's when. And this new breed of smart light looks set to be the future of cycling.

The See.Sense Icon, launched last month, is one great example. The original See.Sense light was operated by motion gestures – a cool, innovative feature but perhaps too clever for its own good. For the Icon, See.Sense listened to user feedback and fitted a more conventional on-off button, as well as a second CREE LED to boost output (up to 210 lumens) and improved waterproofing. It'll even send an alert to your smartphone if someone tries to nab your bike

while you're at the café stop, and like the original See.Sense, the Icon's motion sensors make it flash faster and brighter at junctions and when cars approach.

The Garmin Varia is another brainy light system that's been catching our eye lately (it's clearly doing its job). Paired with a Garmin Edge GPS, the front light responds to your ride data, projecting further ahead as your speed increases, while the rear increases in brightness as drivers approach from behind. But perhaps the cleverest part of the Varia system is its Rearview Bike Radar, a bar-mounted display that indicates the relative speed of approach and 'threat level' of the eight closest vehicles. We love it. It's like being a fighter pilot, but on two wheels!

ANY QUESTIONS?

Got a tech query for our experts? Email us at bikesetc@dennis.co.uk



photo :: © Will Matthews

PAIN IS IN THE EYE of the beholder

SRAM

➤ This is Jeremy Powers. He is grimacing because he is in pain. His legs are on fire because he needs to be the first into the turn. He doesn't care how fast he's going. Not because he's crazy. But because he knows his **SRAM HydroR** disc brakes can help him to control his speed, no matter what. So Jeremy rides as fast as he can. Always.

Q & A

Q I've just got myself a heart rate monitor but how do I estimate my maximum heart rate (HRmax)? I understood that it was 220 minus your age. Is this still true?
Chris Swales, Sheffield

A Elliot Lipski, sports scientist and coach with TrainSharp Cycle Coaching, says:

The '220 minus your age' method is fine as an estimate but it's fundamentally flawed because it generalises the entire population and often underestimates true HRmax, particularly in older cyclists.

Now the most accepted way of figuring out how fast your heart can beat is to do an incremental ramp test; as you cycle on a static bike or turbo trainer, the resistance is gradually increased every minute until you reach exhaustion. The peak heart rate at the end of the test can be defined as the HRMax.

But even these readings should be treated with caution, as heart rate is sensitive to factors like temperature, fatigue and adrenaline, so HRmax determined from the ramp test is more of a 'relative max' as opposed to a 'true max' – if we held a gun to



your head in the final stages of the test, you'd probably reach a higher heart rate!

We'd recommend using power over heart rate as a training tool because it's more accurate. This is not to discount the validity of heart rate, but heart rate in conjunction with power is the ideal combination to find out how hard you can work.

ANY QUESTIONS?

Got a performance query for our experts? Email us at bikesetc@dennis.co.uk

BikesEtc tries...

HILL CLIMBING

Want to really test your cycling prowess? The only way is up

Woohoo – it's hill-climbing season! The time of year when cyclists look at roads that resemble walls and declare – with an unnerving stare – that they *will* conquer gravity.

Traditionally scheduled at the end of the summer time-trial season, these hardcore races are held over courses ranging from a few hundred metres to a couple of kilometres, and moving in only one direction – up!

Two of the most famous events are the Catford and Bec races. Held on the same morning and afternoon on the same day in October, both boast such lung-bursting, double-digit gradients, that you'd have to be a bit of loon to take them on. So we sent our resident *BikesEtc* loon to give them a go.

Our plucky chap arrived at the Catford Hill Climb, held on York's

It's all about weight management – some riders saw their bars down to just a foot wide

Hill near Sevenoaks, Kent, bright and early on a Sunday morning, and was immediately struck by just how extreme the world of hill-climbing is. 'It's all about weight management,' Catford Cycling Club's Le Anh Luong told him. 'Take everything off your bike, make it as light as possible.'

Le Anh wasn't joking. Bottle cages and brakes were abandoned, some riders had sown handlebars to just a foot wide, and many were riding without helmets.

When race time rolled around, the sizeable crowd burst into life, all clanging cowbells, and encouraging shouts of 'Up, up, up!' Hearing the race commentator shouting your name over the PA through that wall of noise, claimed our chap, will send shivers up any man's spine.

Later that day, at White Lane near Oxted, Surrey, for the Bec Hill Climb, Bec CC's Gary Beckett told *BikesEtc* that this year's field had an age range that spanned 'from 10 to 73'. He also offered up this pearl of his wisdom, 'Make sure you're warmed up well. And don't forget your cup of tea afterwards.'

It wasn't advice everyone heeded. Pro racer Dan Craven from Team Europcar apparently failed to warm up



BikesEtc's Ollie in hill climbing action. Looks like he's enjoying it

1887

Date of the first Catford CC hill climb, making it the world's longest-running bike race

GIVE IT A GO!

Find your nearest events at cyclingtimetrials.org.uk

An entrance fee usually applies – the Catford Climb, for example, was £10

properly, and found himself nearly 30 seconds off the pace.

'It's surprising how many cyclists have never attempted a hill climb,' says Beckett. 'Last year's Bec, for example, was Tour de France veteran David Millar's first hill climb attempt.'

So there you go. What may look like an event for headbangers is the closest many of us will get to a pro ride. And once you've conquered that gradient, and your heart rate's back to normal, you'll start thinking that maybe it's the cyclists who don't give hill climbs a crack that are the real lunatics. ☺

CLUB DETAILS

Catford Cycling Club catfordcc.co.uk
Bec Cycling Club beccyclingclub.co.uk

Small Tool Rules

How to build the ultimate mini on-bike toolkit

The weather this time of year presents the true pedal head with no end of difficult challenges – mechanical as well as physical. But nobody wants to lug a full tool-kit around on a ride with them, so what is the least amount of extra weight you can get away with? Here's *BikeEtc*'s instant guide to the tools you totally, absolutely, most definitely need...

**PUNCTURE KIT
FWE GLUELESS PATCHES (PACK OF SIX)**
Pre-glued puncture repair patches are a vital space-saving quick fix. Have a pack on your person at all times. Just stick and go!
PRICE: £2.99
CONTACT: evans.co.uk

**SINGLE TYRE LEVER
BIRZMAN WEDGE TYRE LEVER**
Real cyclists only need one tyre lever. Period. So if you can't do it, practice – roadside tantrums will only get you giggled at!
PRICE: £2.99 (for 3)
CONTACT: i-ride.co.uk

**CO2 CANISTER AND INFLATOR
WELDTITE JETVALVE**
Compressed gas is a cyclist's best friend – this metal package of spare air beats a spare tube and pump hands down. It's in!
PRICE: £11 (inflator and one 16g canister)
CONTACT: weldtite.co.uk

**4MM AND 5MM ALLEN KEYS
FROM THE BIRZMAN 19PC HEX SET**
Seat post? Yep. Chainring bolts? Uh-huh. Brake levers and pads? Sure. These two allen keys have got (most of) your bike covered, so are an absolute must.
PRICE: £19.99
CONTACT: i-ride.co.uk

Q & A

Q Should I always use wet chain lube rather than dry lube in winter?
Iain Fryer, Surbiton

A Alex Trimmell, MD of bike care specialists

Muc-Off, says: 'Dry lube should be used in dry and dusty conditions; it contains chemicals that lubricate and decrease friction, sealed in with a wax. But it doesn't repel water, so it'll wash off in the wet. And running your chain without lube can halve the life of your components.'

Wet lube is formulated using synthetic and natural oils, coating the chain with a water-resistant barrier.

Pro teams use wet lube all year round – the weather conditions on a Tour stage can be unpredictable. It looks messy but their bikes are cleaned every stage. We recommend cleaning your bike after every ride too.

ANY QUESTIONS?
Got a maintenance question for our experts? Email us at bikesetc@dennis.co.uk

CARBON SEATPOST CARE

Posh carbon frame or seatpost? Don't let them become stuck with this simple post wash checklist



1

Pop the seatpost out and turn the frame upside-down to drain out any trapped water. Carbon doesn't like harsh chemicals. A little silicone spray on a rag is enough to clean the dirt off.



2

Wipe the post. Check the lacquer is intact. This is particularly important if it proved difficult to remove. If it's dull or the material beneath looks swollen or cracked, it may need replacing.



3

Run your finger around the inside of the seat tube. Remove the clamp if necessary. Once everything is clean, pop the post back in. Carbon parts don't like grease so leave them as they are.



4

If the post moves in the frame with the seat clamp tightened to the correct torque, a sparing application of carbon fibre assembly paste can increase the friction between the two parts.



POWER — IS JUST THE — START

Cateye introduces their Volt Series for 2015. 100 to 6000 lumens of Cateye power, their most comprehensive range yet. With Visibly Superior output, longer run times and a higher performance than ever before. The Volt range represents great design and great value at every level, whether you want to see or be seen in the dark.

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Meet the £1k Wonders

We head to the Long Mynd, Shropshire to tackle a classic route with a trio of budget-busting bikes

WORDS MATT PAGE PHOTOGRAPHY ANTHONY PEASE

ON TEST



GIANT DEFY 1 DISC
£999



WHYTE DORSET
£999



B'TWIN MACH 720
£1,000





Shropshire's hilly heath
and flat moorland makes
the perfect test route





What does a grand get you these days? Six square inches of floor space in the London property market perhaps? A train journey from Cornwall to Scotland? A season ticket to watch AFC Bournemouth play football? Or what about a new bike? The £1,000 price point is, without a doubt, the most competitive in cycling.

Whether that's because it's a nice easy-to-get-past-the-other-half round number, or because it's the maximum price for many cycle-to-work schemes, bike brands are clambering over each other to entice new

customers with their latest, great-value offerings. At this price, we're spoiled for choice.

So how much bike can you actually get for your buck? We picked three of the finest we could find, the Whyte Dorset, B'Twin Mach 720 and Giant Defy 1 – and packed them off to sunny Shropshire to find out. There at Long Mynd along a classic route rammed with steep climbs and snaking back lanes, our test riders were pushed as hard as current EC employment regulations would allow, and with them their bikes. Read on to find out who fared best and won the test.

Time for a quick snack
at Church Stretton.
Mind that cattle grid!



The Whyte edges it, but will it be top dog when the final results are in?

Working a discount

A major driver for big brands to make more bikes costing under the magic £1,000 mark is the Government's brilliant cycle to work initiative. This allows schemes (including Cyclescheme and RideToWork) to offer tax-free savings of up to 42% on new bikes and accessories for full-time employees.

'Employees can buy a bike at a large discount and pay through monthly salary deductions. A £1,000 spend limit has resulted in many manufacturers striving to create high-quality bikes below that price barrier.'

Martin Higgins, Bike Shed Wales (Cardiff) – Cyclescheme award winner, Welsh store of the year





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GIANT

Defy 1 Disc £999

Handsome, dependable all-rounder designed for long stints in the saddle

There's a reason why Giant is, well, *mammoth*. It is, quite simply, great at what it does – which is releasing quality, affordable and reliable bikes. The Giant Defy 1 is a worthy addition to its stable, but with one notable exception – it now comes with disc brakes, previously only available at the higher end of the Defy range. Disc brakes? On a bike that comes in under a grand? Yes, please!

They say first impressions count, and our initial take on the Defy 1 was that it sure is pretty. The aluminium frame is extensively hydroformed giving it very flat, wide tubes. Allied with the bright blue colour scheme ours came in, this ensures the Giant is definitely a bike that can turn heads.

The Defy 1 isn't just easy on the eye, it's also – as Giant claims – a comfortable ride. Its hybrid carbon/aluminium fork did pass a bit of road buzz through the hands according to our tester, but with a short top tube and tall head tube, she found herself riding in a much more upright position than on a more race-orientated bike.

Alright, so this might cost you a bit of speed on the road, but on the plus side you'll stop your osteopath from paying off his mortgage early. The saddle is also kind on your backside, while the quality handlebar and bar tape combo ensure that contact points take the sting out of longer rides.

As for the components, the near full Shimano 105 11-speed groupset is bang on for the price point. The TRP Spyre mechanical disc brakes are powerful and reliable stoppers, while the remainder of the own-brand bits are fit for purpose. That said, our test rider suggested that fitting a lighter wheelset to the bike would have added greater kick to the ride, especially on the climbs. She also became excited about the neat, almost-hidden mounting points on the frame and fork for mudguards, which just add to the bike's practicality and versatility.

If you want a bike that's built more for comfort and speed, this would do nicely. When we pushed our tester to say something bad about the Defy 1, she scratched her head and shrugged. That says it all. As you'd expect from a Giant bike, the Defy 1 does exactly what it says on the tin.



The versatile Giant gave a comfy, neutral ride on all surfaces

**GOOD**

- **Brakes** TRP Spyres offer reliable performance
- **Geometry** A comfortable, neutral ride that almost all riders will be happy with
- **Looks** Everyone said it's the best-looking bike on test

**NOT SO GOOD**

- **Wheels** Feel a little heavy, especially when climbing, so swap the standard ones for a lighter set for an easier ride
- **Fork** There was a bit of road buzz transmitted through the alloy steerer to the hands

**CONCLUSION**

The Giant proved to be a great all-rounder. You could equally use it as a commuter, training or sportive bike. The endurance geometry makes it a great bike for all-day rides, too. The addition of disc brakes over last year's equivalent model also make it a smidge more desirable. Lovely colour too.

PRICE: £999**WEIGHT:** 9.14kg (size M/L
- 53.5cm)**FRAME:** AluXX SL-grade
aluminium, carbon fork**GROUPSET:** Shimano 105
5800 11-speed**BRAKES:** TRP Spyre Alloy,
160mm rotors**CHAINSET:** Shimano
RS500 compact, 50/34**CASSETTE:** 11-speed, 11-32**BARS:** Giant Connect**STEM:** Giant Sport**SADDLE:** Giant
Performance Road**SEATPOST:** Giant D-Fuse
Composite**WHEELS:** Giant P-R2 Disc
rims with Giant Hubs**TYRES:** Giant P-SL1, 25c**WEB:** giant-bicycles.com**Rating**

WHYTE Dorset £999

Brit-designed bike proves to be a dark horse

The first silly mistake you might make with the Whyte Dorset is to dismiss it on paper. For starters, it has the lowest-grade drivetrain in our test. Then there's its weight – at 10.41kg – it's easily the portliest of the three featured here. But take a closer look. This is a bike that has been crafted with love, with a real attention to detail. Touches like the British flag tucked into the seat clamp area have a real whiff of class, while the green anodised stem faceplate, seatpost clamp and skewers all make you nod and smile. The skewers are also a bolt-on type that are attached using a five-sided removable key – a distinct nod towards the bike's potential use as a super-smooth daily commuter.

While its looks might be subtle, the bike itself is a bit of a tough guy. Built and tested in Britain, the Whyte Dorset is designed to be ridden in every kind of UK weather. Mudguard mounts are joined by rear-rack mounts for anyone looking to carry a load, while tyre clearances are generous both front and rear. Even with 28mm tyres fitted there's plenty of room for mudguards, or alternatively, if you fancy bigger wheels, tyres up to 35mm in diameter.

Because of the extra height in the fork, the riding position feels higher and more upright, offering what our clearly smitten tester described as 'fantastic ride quality'. He also insisted his bike was the most comfortable of the three ridden, pointing enthusiastically at the 'great saddle', 'slightly larger volume tyres', and 'comfortable bars and bar tape'.

The Dorset's components impressed and although its drivetrain is only 10-speed, using mostly Shimano Tiagra, our tester insisted you'd be hard pushed to notice any difference. Like the Defy 1, this bike also rocks disc brakes, but in this case, TRP's Hy/Rd, which offer the convenience of cable operation with hydraulic callipers providing not just the extra power, but masses of modulation and feel, too.

With its solidity and indestructible wheels, this is one bike you can confidently take on any pothole-ridden road. As it's a bit beefier it's slower going uphill, but coming back down again it's a blast. We can sum this one up in two words – enormous fun!



If it's comfort you're after, this is one bike that delivers in spades

**GOOD**

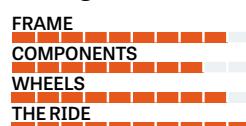
- **Ride quality** Superb comfort and a streamroller feel on poorly surfaced roads
- **Brakes** Great modulation and power at your fingertips
- **Downhill** Confident and fun when descending

**NOT SO GOOD**

- **Weight** Heaviest of our trio, which hampers climbing
- **Drivetrain** 10-speed only, but performance isn't affected
- **High front end** This kind of geometry may not suit all riders

**CONCLUSION**

The Whyte Dorset offers a fantastic all-round package. It's a bike with real character and one that adds up to far more than the sum of its parts. Although it's clearly designed with commuters in mind, it's capable of so much more than just that. This is the definition of a versatile bike.

PRICE: £999**WEIGHT:** 10.41kg (size 54)**FRAME:** Hydroformed aluminium frame, straight blade carbon fork**GROUPSET:** Shimano Tiagra 10-speed**BRAKES:** TRP Hy/Rd, 160mm rotors**CHAINSET:** FSA Omega compact, 50/34t**CASSETTE:** Shimano Sora 10 speed, 11-32**BARS:** Whyte**STEM:** Whyte**SADDLE:** Whyte**SEATPOST:** Whyte**WHEELS:** Whyte Road Disc rims and hubs**TYRES:** Maxxis Rouler, 28c**CONTACT:** whyte.bike/gb**Rating**

B'TWIN Mach 720 £1,000

Amazing-value race thoroughbred from the French superstore brand

You might not have heard of the B'Twin brand, but we'd wager you know the company behind it – Decathlon. The French sports retail giant now has 20 superstores all over the UK as well as a formidable online presence, and with B'Twin it has given this country a range of top-value bicycles. First impressions of the new B'Twin Mach 720 do nothing to damage that reputation – not least when you feel how light it is.

The full carbon frame looks purposeful and aerodynamic, and although the semi-integrated seat tube limits the minimum seatpost height, our rider found it a perfect fit.

The promise of speed offered by the bike's design didn't disappoint either. Its short head tube and stretched top tube immediately pulled our man into a classic head-down racing position, a feature further emphasised by the slightly higher-than-expected bottom bracket. As for the wheels? Ooh-la-la...

Despite the low spoke count, which helps keep the overall weight down, we found them surprisingly stiff. While riding out on skinny 23mm tyres, our man in the saddle also reports that there was real comfort at both the front and rear of the bike, with great stability when hurtling downhill in a straight line. It was only when he took the Mach 720 through the bumpier or twistier parts of this course that he became a little nervous.

A full Shimano 105 groupset gave our tester nothing to quibble about either, and he found the choice of mid-compact chainset with 11-28 cassette provided a more than adequate gearing range. The own-brand brakes were reassuringly powerful, while the B'Twin finishing kit was solid.

When we finally prised our tester from the Mach 720, the only things he could find to moan about were the slightly narrow handlebar diameter and thin bar tape. He also pointed out a lack of mudguards and rack mounts, which wouldn't really be expected on a race-orientated bike anyway.

However, our chap loved all the cool little flourishes – including the anodised red bottle cage mounts and carbon fibre headset cap – things you wouldn't really expect to find on a bike from such a huge retailer. Très bien!



What's French and goes like a rocket? Go on, we'll give you three guesses...

**GOOD**

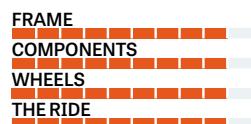
- **Lightweight** The lightest bike on test by a long way
- **Fast** Low weight helps, but race geometry makes it faster
- **Wheels** A light and fast wheelset on a bike at this appealing price is a huge plus

**NOT SO GOOD**

- **Tall seat tube** The tall, semi-integrated seat mast reduces range of fit for some riders
- **Handlebar diameter** Thin bar and tape won't appeal to all
- **Tyres** A 25mm tyre would add comfort as well as speed

**CONCLUSION**

If your priorities for a new bike are speed and weight, then look no further. Almost 1kg lighter than the Giant and 2kg lighter than the Whyte, it makes for a faster and more lively ride. We loved it. For the money, we can't think of a bike with better spec – a fantastic choice for aspiring racers.

PRICE: £1,000**WEIGHT:** 8.39kg (size 53)**FRAME:** Full carbon, with full carbon fork with tapered steerer**GROUPSET:** Shimano 105 5800 11-speed**BRAKES:** B'Twin dual-pivot calliper brakes**CHAINSET:** Shimano mid-compact, 52/36**CASSETTE:** Shimano 105 11-speed, 11-28**BARS:** B'Twin**STEM:** B'Twin**SADDLE:** B'Twin**SEATPOST:** B'Twin**WHEELS:** B'T Aero 20/24**TYRES:** Hutchinson Equinox, 23c**CONTACT:** btwin.com**Rating**



BikesEtc

BEST
IN TEST

Whyte Dorset

Our winner shows you can never judge a bike until you've ridden it



The competition among bike brands is extremely fierce at the £1,000 price point, so it came as no surprise that each of these bikes would be good value for money and fun to ride. What did surprise us, however, was just how good they all were.

The B'Twin Mach 720 offers incredible value for money, and is arguably the best-value bike out there for £1,000 or under. There are some minor niggles if you really want to be picky – the stealth black speedster sports its own-brand rim brakes not discs, but if you're after a racing bike and have a spare thousand quid itching to get spent then there's no doubt about it, this is your new ride.

The Defy 1 is great for comfort and because it's Giant you know you can trust it to deliver everything you want from a bike with minimum fuss. But for us, at the end of the day, there can only be one winner...

In this case, the Whyte Dorset just edges it. Everything about it should scream loser in this three-way competition. It's heavier, it's lower spec and – superficially at least – it's aimed towards the commuter market. But the Whyte Dorset isn't a loser, it's a winner purely because it just felt better to ride. This bike delivered more freedom, exhilaration and joy – and we all know they're the only three things ever worth getting on a bike for. ☺

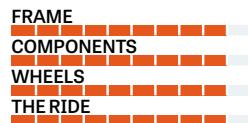
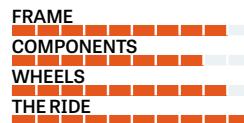
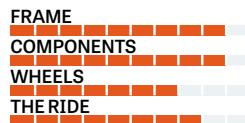
**GIANT
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£999**



**WHYTE
DORSET
£999**



**B'TWIN
MACH 720
£1,000**





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JULY



DECEMBER

One year, two riders, 12 rides – how two Mamils rode with a bucket list of challenges, and produced an inspiring book...

WORDS ROB KEMP
PHOTOGRAPHY PHIL ASHLEY





NOVEMBER



JUNE

saddle

SEPTEMBER



AUGUST



OCTOBER

Like all the best ideas, inspiration for John Deering and Phil Ashley's excellent *Twelve Months In The Saddle* came over a post-ride pint.

Author John and his snapper pal Phil, have been mates since school and wear their 'mamil' status with pride. 'No qualms about it at all,' John (48) tells *BikesEtc* in a riverside pub on a chilled autumn evening. 'We've always enjoyed cycling for the love of it, cycling for looking up, and looking around, and taking it all in. There's no head-down peering at the Garmin with us. We're no speed merchants.'

Phil (49) concurs. 'You won't catch many riding in our slipstream.'

The pair construct their anecdotes over the beer mats in the same way they do the narrative of their book. It's an effortless,

→

amiable tag-team affair – one finishing the other's sentence or else chipping in with a cutting quip when their verbal sparring partner weakens or becomes too inflated.

It's warm-hearted banter in the original sense, before that became a byword for online offensiveness. And it's fun. This intrepid duo experienced a dozen enviable adventures in the making of this book and they love talking about them. You can easily imagine, as you read it, exactly what it would have been like. Records aren't broken – but every nook, cranny, vista, pastry, pint and pothole of note gets a mention. Certainly, they must spend a lot of the time riding two abreast if a couple of hours of chewing the cud (and bar snacks) with them is anything to go by.

'John's a great "ringer" to have in a pub quiz,' interrupts Phil as his mate elaborates upon the 18th-century roads built by English soldiers as part of the clearances of the Scottish clans. This part of the conversation, incidentally, comes about after a serious diversion from a chat about the route that's No 12 – December: The West Highland Way.

'We actually rode that one second, but it appears as the last one,' says John. 'We started in November, although the book runs from January onwards. Originally we had a mate, driving a bike-laden Renault Espace with a dodgy cam-belt. He was acting as photographer's assistant, too. But I think the bitter cold eventually got to him.'

Phil jumps in. 'It was either that or the wild Exmoor horses. Either way, after January he was always "busy" when we invited him along.'

How did the ride list come about? John sips his beer as Phil enthusiastically takes over...

'Just the same way it would if you were doing it – or any cyclists who enjoy riding



June: On the Dragon Ride looking over the Fforest Fawr, bathed in Welsh sunshine



November: On the vast, wide expanse of Dunkery, the highest part of Exmoor Forest



July: High above Loch Kishorn, the landing point for fantastic seafood, on the Bealach na Ba



April: Many Paris-Roubaix riders experimented with suspension during the 1990s

enough to devote a dozen weekends a year to exploring where it most appeal to them.'

The aim, Phil explains, was to feature places they were within easy reach of and could get to for a couple of days. Like a tennis referee, my head turns as John now elaborates. 'This is for the man who dreams of weekends away in France, Italy, Belgium... and Sussex. He wants to proudly walk back into work on Monday morning and announce with a flourish – Guess what? This time yesterday I was halfway up l'Alpe d'Huez.'

Their gameplan has turned out perfectly.

'We'd done a couple of weekend rides together before in a kind of unstructured, haphazard, loosely-know-where-we're-going kind of way,' says John, sheepishly.

'Which is pretty much how we went about these 12 as well!' adds Phil.

From a cold Exmoor start, John and Phil – minus their Renault-driving mate – spent weekends ascending, absorbing and arguing on some of cycling's most desirable routes.

Their book isn't an Ordnance Survey-style planner, but a rich visual and linguistic



snapshot of what riding the Coast-to-Coast, Mont Ventoux, Paris-Roubaix and the South Downs Way – among others – with tremendous company is really like.

It's like a cycling, Lycra-clad version of Rob Brydon and Steve Coogan's *The Trip* – except in book form and without the endless Al Pacino and Michael Caine impersonations.

The photographs – from the shuddering black and white shot of Molenberg's Dutch cobbles, to the spring lamb spectators on the Lake District's Fred Whitton Challenge – are especially enticing for those thinking of following suit. John's writing blends humour with powerful descriptions of the pain a sportive can cause, or the psychological effect riding in a wilderness steeped in history like Glencoe can evoke. It's almost worth buying this book its own coffee table to sit on.

Not that all the rides they undertook made the final cut, though. 'Some were dependent on timing too,' reveals John. 'Both Phil and I work full-time and have other commitments. Arguing over which ones we were going to do was almost as much fun as riding them! ➤

'We've been to the north, west and south of England – plus Scotland, Wales, France, Belgium and Italy. We went the wrong way almost as often as we stayed on track – but, of course, we didn't stop once to ask directions,' he says with a knowing grin. 'For we are men!'

THE RIDES

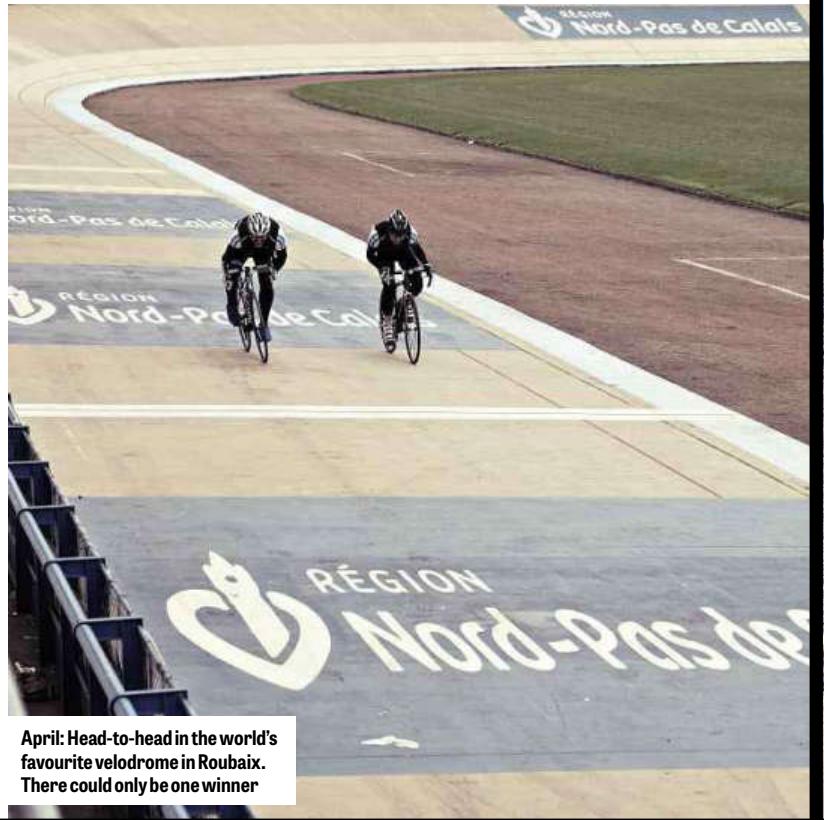
JANUARY: First on the 12 Rides bucket list is a Coast-to-Coast, C2C or Sea-to-Sea. 'In theory you can do it in a day,' explains Phil. 'There's a more rugged, off-road, three-day route or a two-day road option – that's what we went for.'

The pair started from Whitehaven in Cumbria – minus the ailing Espace. 'The AA took that off our hands when the cam-belt snapped and trashed the engine,' laughs John.

From there, they scaled the Lake District's stunning Whinlatter Pass dodging the ice patches before descending into Derwent Water and Keswick, then across open moors towards the Lakeland Fells. It was bleak. The signs were coated in fresh snow,' John admits.

This was the kind of environment, Phil reveals, that makes him feel particularly alive, and over the following 12 months the pair managed to find their way into a few more.

FEBRUARY: The following month, it was southern discomfort by way of a parky 6am



THE NEXT BUCKET LIST

John hasn't run out of ideas for once-in-a-lifetime cycling challenges

So where might John and Phil tackle next for a new book? 'The temptation is to go bigger, better and harder,' says John. 'But we have to stick to picking routes that anybody with a bit of ambition could manage. Variety and originality are our watchwords.' Here are John's dream picks...



JANUARY SNOWDON, NORTH WALES

'I rode this on a steel Muddy Fox in 1989. These days, I think you can only ride up the main paths in winter anyway, and the descent to Llanberis is still one of the best in the country.'

FEBRUARY ANGLIRU, NORTHERN SPAIN

'Asturias is laden with amazing roads, and they're not so high in altitude that winter riding is out of the question. Damned steep, mind.'

MARCH MILAN-SAN REMO, NORTHERN ITALY

'There's something really awesome about this route with the dank start in Milan, the freezing, never-ending drag over the Turchino, then the layers coming off for the Capi.'

APRIL TOUR OF YORKSHIRE, NORTHERN ENGLAND

'The Tour de France has made these roads well known, and the spring visit of the new Tour of Yorks has kept the crowds flocking in. We're never calling it the Tour de Yorkshire if we have our way, though.'



MAY VÄTTERNRUNDAN, SOUTHERN SWEDEN

'Picture a Swedish lake, 300km round its banks, and thousands of riders with no chance of a shortcut unless they have a friend with a boat. Plus plenty of daylight to do it in.'

JUNE MARATONA DES DOLOMITES, NORTHERN ITALY

'A classic. Maybe we'll do the Marmotte on Saturday, then drive through the night before doing the Maratona on the Sunday?'

JULY PYRENEES CIRCLE OF DEATH

Phil wants to do this on 1910 bikes, too, but I reckon the Peyresourde, Port de Balès, Aspin, Tourmalet, Hautacam, Aubisque, Tourmalet (again), Hourquette d'Ancizan and Plat d'Adet in three days would be enough for me even if I was in a car.'

AUGUST TOUR O'THE BORDERS, SOUTHERN SCOTLAND

'These are such lovely roads, and nobody knows about them.'

SEPTEMBER TROLLHUNTER, WESTERN NORWAY

'Trondheim, Molde, the Atlantic Highway and the Trollstigen. Oh, and lots of pickled fish to eat along the way. Looking forward to this one.'

OCTOBER GRAN FONDO PROSECCO, NORTHERN ITALY

'If you thought l'Eroica had good feed-stations, then you'll love the Prosecco. They have waiters handing you booze. Waiters!'

NOVEMBER RING OF KERRY, SOUTHWEST IRELAND

'Can you think of anything more autumnal than the west of Ireland in November? It'll be gorgeous, but we'll be bringing the rain jackets.'

DECEMBER BAVARIA, SOUTHERN GERMANY

'Time to find out if those German Christmas markets that fill 21st century England in December have any basis in fact. Plus you can't beat an advent calendar schloss, can you? No need to argue. You can't!'



'Everything about the Flanders trip is epic. Our advice is – go!'

September: The lunar landscape at the summit of Mont Ventoux is often mistaken for snow



April: The centre of the Hell of the North, Arenberg. This is the most difficult section

start from Winchester for a two-day ride along the South Downs Way. Winchester was the Hampshire town where Alfred the Great was crowned, according to John (aka Mr Trivia). The duo set off as the sun appeared over Cheesefoot Head, in the lap of the Downs. 'It's where Eisenhower addressed the troops before D-Day,' explains John.

'On B or C-Day probably, then,' Phil adds.

The 100-mile ride featuring mid-winter terrain ('Like riding through a mud-wrestling pit after a soaking') included magical views of the English Channel and an overnight stop in the medieval splendour of Arundel, West Sussex, before Beachy Head. 'There's a lung-busting climb up Firle Beacon just outside of Lewes. When we reached the top, the sky was filled with paragliders,' beams John.

MARCH: The chaps head to Belgium. 'The Tour of Flanders is like FA Cup Final Day when we were kids,' says John. 'Everything

about this trip is epic. Our advice is – go! Get there on Friday, ride the event on Saturday with 20,000 others, watch the pros race on Sunday, then get home for last orders.'

Highlights – aside from the beer – include cobbled ramps and 'Koppenbergstraat'. Confused? Over to John... 'Just swing around a dead corner at almost walking pace and holy hamstrings, look at that! In front of you is a road that looks like a climbing wall. It's nearly vertical – with hundreds of people dressed in brightly coloured clothing hanging on to it.'

APRIL: John and Phil take on bumpy, beautiful Paris-Roubaix with British Cycling Hall of Famer Sean Yates's encouraging summary ringing in their ears. 'The cobbles in France aren't like those you rode in Belgium. Here they're bigger and more knackered.'

Phil and John get in a training ride with Team Sky before taking on the legendary route. The scenery in a region once home ➤

to the French coal-mining industry provides scant compensation for some of the surfaces.

'Picture riding over a cattle grid,' says John. 'Now imagine there's been some kind of earthquake beneath it that warped the bars. Now think about that going on for two miles. That's the feeling of the Trouée d'Arenberg.'

MAY: This month, is all about the passes and pubs they experience as they negotiate the Fred Whitton Challenge. Though there doesn't seem to be much negotiating taking place. 'That was the toughest one of the lot for me,' says John after tackling what many consider the hardest road in England, Hardknott Pass. Phil agrees that the Fred Whitton lives up to its last name. ('The A66 was a low point in my cycling year with headwinds, juggernauts and long drags.)

FIVE DOWN, SEVEN TO GO

JUNE: The boys tackle one of Britain's biggest sportives, The Dragon Ride, through the epic landscape of South Wales's Rhondda Valley.

JULY: It's on to Bealach na Bà in the Scottish Highlands and some of the book's most breathtaking photography. Captured on long sunny days, these reveals Scotland's giant wilderness in all its stunning glory.

AUGUST: The pair swap the sublime solitude of Scotland for a ridiculously hectic 48 hours in August doing the 'Monopoly Board' in London – and end up in an almost calamitous collision with an ambulance.

SEPTEMBER: Mont Ventoux, the notorious Giant of Provence, provides an inspirational backdrop to this month's stretch. Scene of some of Le Tour's most talismanic and tragic events, this ride, and the next – L'Eroica in glorious Tuscany – are full of spectacle and memories of a lifetime.

August: Pausing for thought at London's Piccadilly Circus



TOP TIPS FOR AN EXCELLENT ADVENTURE

1

JOHN: 'Plan everything to within an inch of its life, but then be ready to be flexible, too.'

PHIL: 'Yeah, when a plan you've worked on for ages doesn't work out because of a mechanical, illness, weather; whatever; it's easy to get pissed off. The trick is to make the most of the situation. Something else will probably reveal itself instead of your original intention.'

2

PHIL: 'Keep gels and bars to a minimum. If you down a gel every hour during 20-odd eight hour-plus days throughout the year, your guts will let you down long before your knees do.'

JOHN: 'Man can't survive on tangy apricot and cherry caffeine alone. Starvers, take note!'

3

PHIL: 'Fit and comfort beat speed and bling.'

JOHN: 'Yep. You can enjoy 10 hours at 15mph average if you're soaking up the road. One hour at 20mph followed by nine interspersed with lying on a wet grass verge stretching your back out every couple of miles because of that super-stiff aero Tour stage-winning bike is less easy to love. Think about that for a second.'

4

JOHN: 'It's all about riding your bike, no matter what Lance said. You've spent a lot of time, money and effort getting there.'

PHIL: 'He's right – get on with it, but don't forget to drink it all in.'

5

JOHN: "Think really hard about what you carry. Don't forget that Mallory and Irvine climbed Everest in tweed suits and hobnail boots, so carrying Gore-Tex and Oakley kit for every possible eventuality will weigh you down before it saves you."

PHIL: 'Hmm... You do know what happened to Mallory and Irvine, right?' (Clue: they died)

6

JOHN: 'Weigh a bit less. I did some core strengthening which definitely helped with climbing – long training miles on the bike only do so much for you – but if I'm honest, I could sacrifice a fair bit of power if I dropped 10 kilos. Obvious, but it needs saying.'

PHIL: 'You're speaking for yourself on this one, Bunter!'

7

JOHN: 'It's meant to be fun.'

PHIL: 'At last, we agreed on something, wholeheartedly!'

August: Stopping for refreshment on the London 'Monopoly board' ride



'It's all about riding your bike – no matter what Lance said'



December: Beinn Dorain towers over the route and the West Highland Railway



December: A blizzard on the Devil's Staircase and a tricky time to be a cyclist

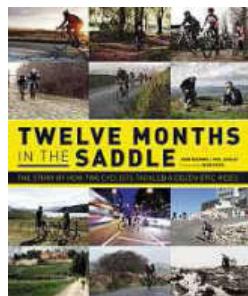
OCTOBER: 'There's something about L'Eroica,' says John. 'Climbing the candlelit Tuscan roads at 5.30am make the experience very special. It's my favourite ride of the lot.'

However, John and Phil's appetite for adventure wasn't the only thing being stoked.

'We were necking bananas and protein bars from Ronse to the Rhondda. But nothing were quite like L'Eroica's pit-stop feast. It offered freshly cut Montélimar nougat, a tasty wild boar stew and Chianti Classico. I tucked into a second portion of cinghiale casseruola (stew), blissfully unaware that I would then have to scale the biggest hill of the ride!'

NOVEMBER: The guys return to the UK to brave the elements on Exmoor in the wilds of Devon. The saddle-based squabbles come at a pace on a par with the rapid descent – 1,300ft in two miles – at Countisbury.

DECEMBER: The book ends on an atmospheric high as the duo conquer the West Highland Way, taking in the ghosts of Glencoe as well as other more locally produced spirits. ☘



Published by Carlton books, *Twelve Months In The Saddle* costs £16.99 and is available from Amazon and bookshops or via carltonbooks.co.uk

ROOM FOR ONE MORE!

With bikes designed for every conceivable purpose there's a cycle shaped hole in your life. You just don't realise it yet...

WORDS: JOSEPH DELVES

In the beginning there was the racing bicycle and it was good. With drop bars, skinny tyres and a head-down, bum-in-the-air riding style it quickly came to populate the earth. But as the bikes multiplied so they began to change and grow in variety. Racing bike begat

touring bike. Touring bike begat sportive, cyclocross and gravel bike, on and on to create a bewildering universe of different bicycles. Each evolved to suit its own natural habitat (and occasionally the whims of their creators' marketing departments).

While the average road bike will

happily take on most duties, there is a bike out there designed to excel in exactly those conditions. If proof were need that there's definitely space in the shed for one more bike, here's our guide to the wide world of bicycles, how to tell them apart and which your life is missing...

COBBLES

Relaxed geometry and tyres with traction for brutal terrain

The spring Classics are a world away from the smooth roads and sunny glamour of events later in the calendar. These races criss-cross the farm tracks of Europe's Low Countries. With the weather often as unforgiving as the roads, the bikes need to be tough.

Bouncing over the pavé (that's French for cobbles, you know), larger than average tyres allow riders to run lower pressures to increase grip and comfort. While pro level race bikes tend to be stingingly harsh, most companies build additional bump-eating capabilities into their Classics bikes, such as the Domane's decoupled seatpost that flexes to absorb impacts.

These bikes have slightly relaxed geometry, further improving rider comfort when the going gets rough.

In recent years, one of most successful Classics riders, Fabian Cancellara, has ridden a unique Trek bike with a split top tube and seatpost that allow the frame to flex far more than a standard design. Although it might add a little weight, the team figures that it's taking the hit if it means their man reaches the final sprint less fatigued.



RIDE THE BUMPS

- Compliant frame to lessen the beating inflicted on the rider
- Extended wheelbase and slacker head angles for added stability
- Larger tyres for traction on rough surfaces
- Greater frame clearance for mud picked up off grotty roads





ALL-ROAD

Strong and solid, these bikes will take everything that you throw at them...

 Faster and lighter than a traditional touring bike, beefier than an audax bike and less mud-centric than a European cross bike. The gravel bike, or all-road bike, is meant for venturing into the wilderness.

Very trendy in the States, their existence owes a lot to the advent of disc brakes. They've allowed designers to build frames to accommodate the big clearances and chunky tyres that define this style of bike. Perfect for adventure touring, how relevant they are to a country like Britain, which isn't exactly famed for its expanses of unpaved roads, seemed

questionable. Or did, until we actually tried one.

With slack, stable geometry and lots of room above the top tube, they practically invite hoodlum type behaviour. Strong enough to cope with terrain normally the preserve of mountain bikers, their powerful brakes mean you can usually get yourself out of trouble if you get a little too enthusiastic.

They're not slow on the tarmac either, making them a true go-anywhere machine, that wear their abilities lightly – by which we mean they're not too much of a drag once you return to paved roads of civilisation.



SPEED MACHINES

- Brutally stiff, with long stems and low front ends
- Often custom made to find a particular rider's preferred geometry
- Power meters come as standard
- Tubular tyres are fast but can't be easily repaired



Cervélo R2105,
£1,999, cervelo.com

RACER'S BIKE

Stiff, light, fast and responsive, true racing bikes are the purest of breeds

What's the difference between a racing bike and a racers' bike? A bike for racing will have few concessions to comfort, ease of servicing or even ride quality. They're the thoroughbreds of the cycling world, built purely for speed. Unrelentingly stiff, the hunched position achieved by the low front end and super long and slammed stems require extreme flexibility and core strength to maintain.

That said, this allows riders to generate maximum power while presenting the smallest frontal area to the wind. Racers often use a slightly too-small frame for

additional stiffness and to save weight, which requires longer stems and seatposts to achieve the correct position, so handling can be 'interesting'.

As any team will be able to get its bikes down to the UCI minimum weight of 6.8kg they're free to choose where to add extra bulk, often opting for super inflexible stems and alloy handlebars.

And while our example comes with stock clincher wheels, these will usually be replaced with ultra-stiff, ultra-light carbon rims with tubular tyres for race day.

Until recently disc brakes have been banned but that's changing.



AERO ROAD

These wind-cheating machines are sleek and slippery, and made for the breakaway

NeilPryde Nazaré
2 Ultegra, £3,000,
neilprydebikes.com

WIND SLICERS

- Race-oriented bike designed for solo escapes or riding on the front
- Low and narrow position for the rider
 - Aerodynamic wheels and frame
- Extreme examples tend to suffer in terms of handling



As racing bikes began to butt up against the 6.8kg minimum weight limit imposed by the UCI, manufacturers were forced to look elsewhere in search of marginal gains.

Aerodynamics provided a second front in the quest to go faster for less energy. These slippery customers take many of the design features of time-trial machines and pack them into a UCI-legal bike for bunch racing.

Tubes are squished into wind-cheating profiles. Brakes and cables are integrated or tucked away, while wheels are as deep as possible without becoming dangerous when buffeted by the wind. This makes them ideal for breakaway specialists who spend hours riding alone ahead of the bunch.

With bladed tubes and deep section wheels these bikes have a reputation for being harsh to ride and can be a handful in crosswinds.

TIME TRIAL

The ultimate bike for testing your speed against the clock

Bikes made solely for time trials are designed for one thing: to go fast in a straight line. With courses predominantly flat, gears are limited and tailored exactly to the course profile. Huge front chainrings allow riders to tank along at incredible speeds.

Aerodynamic features such as solid disc wheels and handlebar extensions, help bike and rider slip through the air with as little resistance as possible. Unfortunately, they also make handling a nightmare, particularly when the wind picks up, which is why they're banned in bunch races to prevent crashes.

Even more than the bike it's the rider's position that determines time-trialling efficiency. Narrow bar extensions allow riders to get as low as possible, while armrests support the weight on the forearms. But be warned, teamed with a skinsuit and ridiculous looking sperm-head helmet, there are few concessions to either style, comfort or going around corners. A very specialist bit of kit.



BMC Timemachine TM02, £2,000,
evanscycles.com

BUILT TO GO FAST

- Brutally low and stretched out riding position
- Aerodynamic tube profiles and solid wheels are fast but difficult to handle
- Prohibited in most mass start events or races
- Massive chainrings for sustained speed.



CYCLOCROSS

Neither a road bike nor an MTB, but immense amounts of fun to race



LET'S OFF-ROAD!

- Knobbly tyres and plenty of clearance to stop mud jamming the wheels
- Primarily designed for racing
- Easy to carry for running up stairs and over obstacles
- Increasingly likely to use disc brakes



Focus Mares CX 2.0, £2,300, focus-bikes.com

 Cyclocross is bonkers. If you've never spectated or raced, it's hard to explain its appeal. Taking place over the winter months, riders thrash around off-road in the mud on machines ill-adapted for the terrain, stopping to shoulder their bikes and vault over obstacles. It's as if a bunch of roadies had accidentally entered a steeplechase. Also it's huge in Belgium. And ridiculously good fun.

Cyclocross bikes are essentially road bikes on steroids – very light, stiff and aggressive, with high bottom brackets to stop pedals getting stuck in the mud. Tyres are wider than road bikes but limited by the regulations to 33mm.

With races lasting an hour, pure cross bike often don't feature bottle cage mounts but their robustness and versatility makes them popular as all-rounders – something manufacturers have cottoned on to by making designs more suited to multi-use riding.

AUDAX

Ideal if you like to ride all day and all night, and then all day again

 If you want to spend a boring hour, ask an audax rider what the difference between them and a touring cyclist is. In condensed form, the answer is that audaxing is a point-to-point ride, normally using a prescribed route with a maximum time limit. By comparison, touring is basically a cheap holiday without a car.

Audax routes are often huge and some events last days, covering hundreds of miles. This makes comfort on the bike paramount, something evident in most riders' preference for forgiving steel frames. Leather saddles, handlebar-mounted map cases and waxed cotton bags are also popular.

Unlike touring, time-controlled checkpoints mean a degree of speed is necessary. Correspondingly audax bike geometry will try to strike a balance between comfort and speed. The same is true of the tyres, which tend to be of medium width to keep riders comfy and deal with mixed conditions. Considering riders can be out for days at a time, most bikes will accept mudguards to deal with changeable weather.



Condor Fratello Disc, £750 (frameset), condorcycles.com

GO THE DISTANCE

- Frequently steel but often carbon
- Slightly relaxed geometry
- Clearance for bigger tyres, mudguards and occasionally racks
- Strong hand-built wheels, often with lots of spokes



SPORTIVE

Near-pro performance with everyman levels of comfort and spec

 Take a spin on a pro team bike and your first thought will likely be, 'Wow, this is fast!'

However, the next will be, 'Wow, this is uncomfortable!' followed quickly by the realisation that you haven't got enough gears to climb even moderately sized hills. This is because while everyone likes a little sprinkle of pro-rider stardust, most of us aren't suited to riding the same bike as our heroes.

Sportives aren't races in the traditional sense but riders still want to put in a good performance. To this end sportive bikes take racing geometry but temper it slightly. Front ends get higher so as not to cripple your back, handling gets less twitchy and frames become more compliant. As getting to the top of a big climb is likely to be an achievement in itself, they'll pack in a wider ratio of gears along with mountain-taming compact chainsets. Not constrained by pro regulations, many have disc brakes.

Don't be lulled into thinking these bikes will be either cheap or slouchy though. At the top of the market, they feature carbon wheels and electronic gearing. They'll also be a blast to ride.



Giant Defy Advanced 2, £1,300, giant-bicycles.com

FAST AND FUN

- Wide range of gears
- Slightly higher front end to create a less stressful position on the bike
- Sensible finishing kit, like bars and saddle with an emphasis on comfort; often disc brakes
- Designed to be fast yet forgiving



TOURER

For the rider who calls the road his home, these are the ideal escape vehicle

Surly Long Haul Trucker, £1,150, ison-distribution.com

SENSE OF ADVENTURE

- Fittings for racks and mudguards
- Upright position for all day comfort
- Huge spread of gears for hauling supplies over high peaks
- Steel is real for traditional tourers



Touring bikes are the pack mules of the cycling world, allowing you to attach pannier bags both front and rear, and built strong to bear the weight of tents, stoves and cool boxes. Unlike almost every other corner of the market, steel is still king among tourers.

Why's this? Partly because its increased weight is likely to pale into insignificance compared to the heft of the luggage carried but also because of its superb vibration dampening properties and immense strength and relative ease of repair.

Cantilever brakes are traditional, although discs are popular. Big tyres help support heavy loads and deal with rough roads, while additional clearance for mudguards is essential. They prioritise comfort and durability over speed, so can be a little leaden to ride but are unbeatable when it comes to getting out into the wild. ➤

TRACK

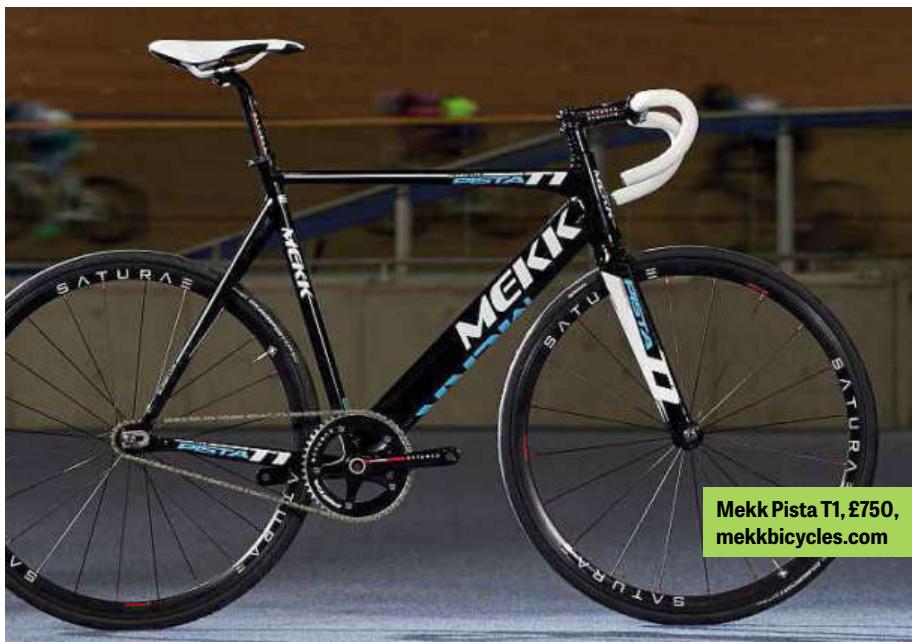
OK, so it's not strictly a road bike but you need one all the same

 Turn left, repeat. Going constantly round in circles has meant track bikes have evolved in perfect harmony with their natural habitat – the velodrome.

To keep riders in perfect sync on these short, steeply banked tracks, and minimise accidents caused by sudden changes in speed, brakes are prohibited. Track bikes also always have a fixed drivetrain to prevent riders from coasting. Slowing down is done gradually by resisting the rotation of the cranks.

To prevent pedals from striking the angled track, the bottom of the frame is much higher than usual. The impeccably maintained surface of the track means tyres are very skinny and pumped to phenomenal pressure to minimise rolling resistance.

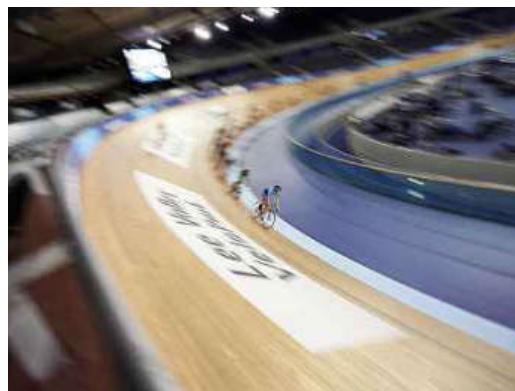
As riders are set off either by a mechanical gate or by way of a friendly helping hand on the bum, you can also expect to find your feet lashed to the pedals via a combo of clipless pedals and straps. While this helps produce maximum power, on the downside if you crash you'll remain locked to the bike. Yee-ouch!



Mekk Pista T1, £750,
mekkbicycles.com

FAST AND FURIOUS

- No brakes and a single fixed gear
- Designed for racing
- Different styles for different events like time trials or bunch races
- Gearing can be changed only by swapping chain rings and sprockets



TRAVEL BIKE

Stick one of these handy bikes in your suitcase next time you travel abroad

PACK & GO

- Small wheels for easy packing
- Unconventional tube arrangements to accommodate folding and easy dismantling
- Proper road bike performance, despite the odd looks
- Comes with its own carry case for easy transport – and within airlines' luggage size guidelines



Airnimal Chameleon Performance Sport, £2,000, airnimal.eu



Forget the brilliant but commuter-oriented Brompton, we're talking seriously nippy bikes that can be collapsed into pocket-sized packages.

Cambridge-based Airnimal produce one of our favourites, a 24-inch wheeled bike that'll collapse down into a size not exceeding most airlines' luggage allowance without incurring extra charges. Perfect for squeezing in a cheeky ride while away on a business trip, it'll also easily fit in a car boot or stow away when stored at home.

Despite its diminutive size, clever design means that the positions of the contact points is the same as on a full size bike so that with your eyes on the road ahead you'd be hard pushed to tell you weren't on a conventional bike.

With skinny tyres, the option to fit ultralight wheels and a proper Shimano groupset this is a serious bike in a slightly weird-looking package.

MATERIAL MATTERS

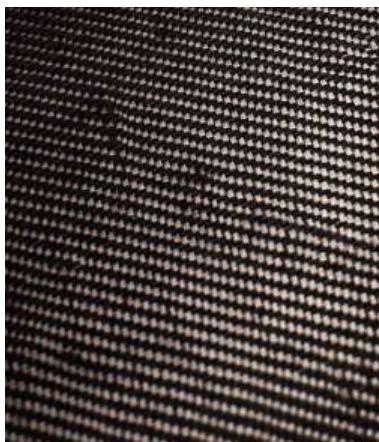
**STUFF REAL BIKES
ARE MADE OF...**

Want a quick guide to what to look for when choosing a bike based on what it's built from? You're in the right place!

CARBON-FRAME BIKES What would your money no object bike be made of? The answer is probably carbon, right? After all, it's light, stiff, strong and can be built into incredibly complex shapes. Although carbon may appear to have conquered the entire cycling world, there are still a few redoubts of resistance to the black stuff stoutly defended by men with beards and pitchforks.

STEEL-FRAME BIKES Despite its decline, ferrous metal does still make sense for bikes. Its strength means it can be built into narrow and therefore compliant tubes, and it can be easily fabricated into custom designs – as well as cheaply repaired – making it well suited to touring and audax bikes. It's also very hard to make a bad-looking steel bike, which has helped fuel a resurgence in traditional frame building.

TITANIUM-FRAME BIKES With similar qualities to steel but far lower in weight and higher in cost, titanium still offers the



promise of a bike that's tough enough to last a lifetime for those who can afford it.

ALUMINIUM-FRAME BIKES Despite the feeling that its time at the top is long since past, some companies are still investing serious research, wonga and design effort into this lightweight metal. While the market for high-end aluminium frames is small compared to other sectors of the bike-buying world, this does at least mean that you'll find that what bikes you do find lurking there are being made available at increasingly affordable prices. The quality of the build is also improving thanks to the trickle down in technology.



Kinesis Racelight 4S
£1,280,
kinesisbikes.co.uk

THE WINTER BIKE

Tough bikes designed for even tougher men

→ A concept that doesn't exist outside of our borders, the winter bike is a staple of the grizzled club cyclist. They'll be the one vainly waiting at the café for the rest of the club to turn up for the Sunday run despite the freezing rain and spine-snapping winds. Some countries are blessed with year-round sunshine and in others, bikes are forsaken altogether in exchange for skis or snowshoes.

While most Belgians wouldn't dream of rocking anything but their Sunday best regardless of the conditions, many riders in the UK will have a bike purely designed for racking up those winter base miles.

Winter bikes tend to take the form of a moderately priced aluminium frame, often with components from seasons past press-ganged back into service.

A few retailers sell bikes specifically marketed as winter rides. These normally have clearance for mudguards and wider-than-average tyres along with a fairly relaxed geometry. They're ideal for riders love to head out regardless of the conditions. These bikes also make great commuters for those who don't want to do without their daily dose of drop-handlebar action. A shot of anticorrosion primer and a hardwearing paint finish are ideal to help shrug off salt spray from the road. ☃



LET'S HAVE IT!

- Cheap and cheerful
- Mudguards and wider tyres for muddy roads
- Older but more durable components like square taper bottom brackets
- Relaxed geometry for long winter miles



WHAT'S STOPPING YOU

Want to go faster? Course you do. But your legs will only get you so far. Use your brain to unravel the forces holding you back and you'll go a lot further

WORDS: MAX GLASKIN PHOTOGRAPHY: HENRY CARTER ➔



Know your enemy, advised Sun Tzu in *The Art Of War*. When it comes to the ongoing battle between cyclist and nature this ancient bit of wisdom is a great shout. So who – or what – is your enemy when it comes to going faster?

Step forward the big three – air resistance, rolling resistance and friction. Well over half of all the energy you expend in the saddle is wasted overpowering these beasts. But, with a little learning and a degree of cunning, you can overcome them to weaken their impact and accelerate your ride.

Before we begin, here's a quick bit of science to help you understand exactly what it is you're up against. Above 16kmh (10mph), your biggest opponent by far is air resistance. When you're cruising at 30kmh (18mph) it's responsible for more than 85% of what's holding you back. Go faster and it rises past 90%. Rolling resistance at 30kmh can account for another 13% of the forces that conspire against you, while friction in the chain and bearings make up the remaining fraction. Got it? Good. Now let's cut to the chase.

AN ILL WIND

Air resistance is a drag, literally. Every cubic metre of air weighs about 1.2kg (at sea level) and you're constantly pushing it away. The faster you ride, the more you have to shove aside, and it never parts with good grace – it grabs at your body, limbs, clothing, helmet, shoes and every little bit of your bike. If we could ride in a perfect vacuum, we'd be able to move at least twice as fast. Unfortunately, we need air to breathe so, you know, the pesky stuff has its uses.

The biggest problem is you. Your entire body is to blame for at least three-quarters of the air resistance, with your bike responsible for the remainder. 'The single most effective thing you can do combat this is change your position,' says Dr Len Brownlie, an independent aerodynamicist who has worked for Nike with the godfather of cycling aerodynamics, Chester Kyle. He has also

GO FASTER WITHOUT WORKING HARDER

Tips in descending order of effectiveness



Change your position so you slice through the air – flatten your back, tuck your head, bring your arms and elbows closer together.

Wear skintight clothing with few, flat seams and no pockets. Long socks can help.

Get ahead with an aero helmet to slash scores of seconds from your time – maybe even a 2% improvement in speed.

Shed a few kilos – you'll cut both air resistance and rolling resistance

Invest in a 12-spoke front wheel and a three-spoke rear.

Try a slightly higher tyre pressure or switch to 25mm tyres.

Lube the chain before every ride and clean it before every race.

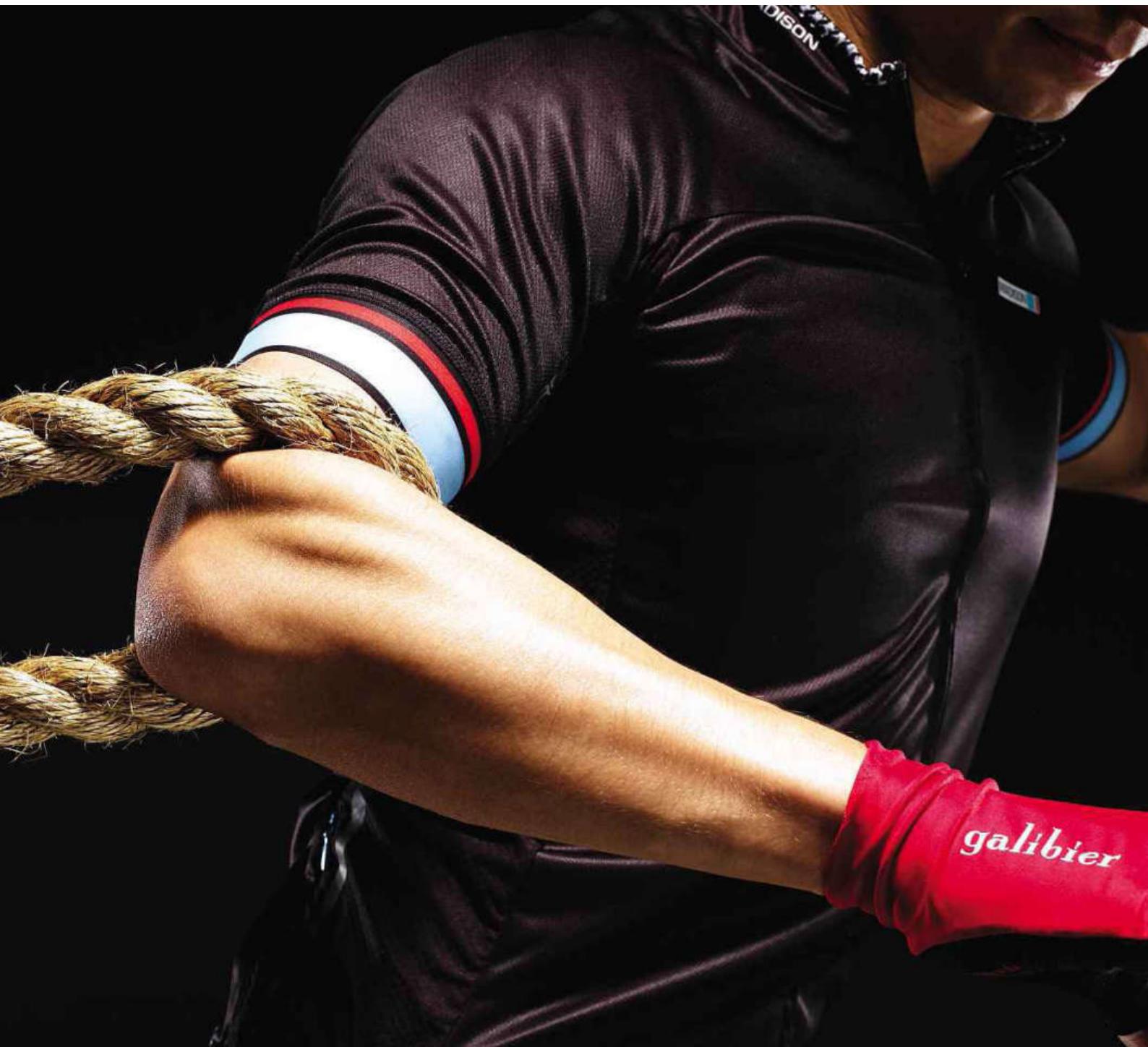
Change the pulleys on an entry-level derailleur for new ones with bearings.



advised the US and Canadian Olympic squads, Easton and HED wheels and Giro helmets, so as experts go, he's pretty expert.

'Get a flat back, elbows closer together, maybe raise the saddle to unlock the hips. Triple Olympic gold medallist Viatcheslav Ekimov was a master of the aero position. He could make his neck like a stork, fold his head into his shoulders and get a nice low profile,' explains the Doc. 'It won't cost you a dollar to reduce your drag, if you're flexible and can get into that shape.'

If you did want to throw a bit of cash at it, you could invest some time in a wind tunnel to perfect your tuck. Otherwise, dedicated outfits such as Drag2Zero (drag2zero.co.uk) will help to smooth you out, and some shops that offer bike fitting can help, too. Brighton's Prestige Cycles (prestige-cycles.co.uk), for example, hires the same tunnel used by Team GB at Southampton University.



Your body is to blame for 75% of air resistance when cycling

The Doc calculates that, for a good time-trialist aiming to cover 25 miles (40km) in 48 minutes, averaging 31mph (50kmh), a finely held aero tuck can do wonders. In fact, it'll improve their time by a whopping 56 seconds compared to a tuck that's not been perfected in a wind-tunnel session.

For a free, rough and ready way to find a more aero position there's a DIY trick you can try on a flat road with no wind. Freewheel from 20mph (32kmh) down to 5mph (8kmh), back-pedalling to replicate normal leg movements. Note the distance you travel. Then do it several more times, changing your shape with each. The most aero tuck will take you the furthest. Easy, huh?

If you want any more than that, though, you're going to have to open your wallet. The next best improvement you can make is with your clothing. It's an anomaly of evolution that human skin is slow, aerodynamically,

and covering it with the right clothing can speed it up,' says Dr Brownlie.

Everything that flaps has to go. The smallest projections, such as the edges of pockets on a jersey, get rid. Seams – put them out of sight of the wind. We're talking skinsuits with textured panels to minimise pressure drag on all parts of the body by helping the air flow around you as smoothly as marbles on a glass table. 'Instead of a conventional bibshort and jersey, a time-trial skinsuit like Nike's Swift can save a rider more than two minutes over 25 miles,' says the Doc.

It's also worth becoming a fashion victim of Team GB circa London 2012. Long socks may look nerdy but with the right roughened surface they cut drag. Shoe covers alone will hide any bumps and save another 30 seconds over a fast 25 miles.

That leaves just one vital body part to consider – your head. By all means smooth ➤



it with a good aero helmet but choose carefully because the best, again according to the Doc, will save you another minute compared to a non-aero road helmet.

Of course, having reduced the rider's drag means the bike itself is to blame for a greater share of the total drag so we're moving into deep wallet territory. Wider tyres can cut drag if paired with deep-section 65mm rims. Going further, a deep-rim, 12-spoke front wheel and a three-spoke rear wheel would together slice 71 seconds off a 25-mile time trial – assuming it's a course with no crosswinds to further complicate the equation.

And what about an aero frame and bars? They'll all help to some degree but for a keen amateur road cyclist they're not going to make much of a difference compared to changing body position,' says Dr Brownlie. 'Start with that, then move through your clothing choice. When that's all sorted, it'll be time to look at the bike and components.'

EASY ROLLER

Onto your next nemesis – rolling resistance. Your tyres flex where the rubber comes into contact with the road. They flatten and spread a little. The flexing is continuous while you ride because your wheels are constantly turning, laying new rubber onto the road. They are also deforming with each tiny stone or pothole they bump across. And it's your energy the rubber is using up.

Petri Hankiola runs Wheel Energy,

a unique tyre-testing lab in Finland. Petri knows exactly how much energy is gobbled by the tyres of pro teams such as Team Sky and FDJ. Tyre makers Michelin, Vittoria and Hutchinson also buy his expert services, as do Mavic, Trek and Specialized. If anyone would know how to tackle nemesis number two, it would be Petri, so we gave him a call.

'For 23mm wide tyres inflated to 103psi, with a bike and rider weighing 70kg, the best will absorb 17 to 20 watts and the worst up to 40w,' he told us. 'Rolling resistance increases with weight so for a set-up 10kg heavier, the best 23mm tyres will consume just 19-22w and the worst up to 45w.'

Or to put it another way, just switching to faster tyres could add 10% to your speed, which could make a huge difference. And that's only the start of the story. The main function of Petri's lab is to produce useful benchmarks, so the figures above are for a perfectly smooth track. More realistically, out on the road, the roughness of the asphalt can increase rolling resistance by up to 20%. Factor in any kind of puncture protection and your tyres will eat even more of your energy. A heavier bike and rider will make rolling resistance even worse, while reducing pressure with the same tyres does likewise.

What does Petri recommend? 'A normal road tyre is 23mm wide but if you switch to 25mm you can reduce the lost energy by 2w,' he says. So a light 70kg total set-up, fitted with the fastest tyres inflated to 103psi could eat as

THE ULTIMATE FRICTION BUSTER!

Giant Trinity Advanced Pro 2016
Price: £4,999 Contact: giant-bicycles.com



Strict UCI regulations prevent bike manufacturers using much of the science discussed here. But it's a different story in triathlon, and in creating its new flagship tri bike, Giant has seamlessly integrated every element even down to the water bottle...

Rough roads can increase the rolling resistance of tyres by 20%

little as 15w on the track and 18w on the road.'

Cool. So does that mean the more you bump up your tyre pressure the more you drive down the effects of rolling resistance, right? No. Inflate your tyres too much and though they'll barely flex, they're now more vulnerable to nemesis number one – air resistance – because their frontal profile has been changed. Pro squad Phonak learned this lesson the hard way. By swelling their tyres to 18opsi, they achieved minimal rolling resistance but the gains were outweighed by the extra drag created, with every bump sent shuddering up through the frame and fork.

THERE'S THE RUB

Right, onto bad guy number three – friction. To help us get our heads around this one we approached literally the best people on the planet – Friction Facts.

Friction Facts is unique. Based in Boulder Colorado, it's the only independent lab in the world that assesses the friction in bicycle parts – the chain, wheel bearings, bottom

bracket, pedal bearings and derailleur pulley wheels. Since Jason Smith set it up in 2012, he has tested hundreds of moving bits and their lubricants for component manufacturers, pro teams and his publicly downloadable reports. It is, erm, a smooth operation.

'You'll lose 7-10w of your energy to the friction in your chain,' says Jason. 'Which is fortunate because it's the easiest part of the bike to access and improve. If you do nothing else, make sure you lube before every ride. If the weather's bad and you have to postpone a training ride, spend that time cleaning your chain and lubricating – do that and you can cut the friction losses to 5w.'

But what about the bearings in the wheels and bottom brackets which can cost a further 6-8w of your energy? According to Jason, the simplest and cheapest solution would be to 'swap out the pulleys from an entry-level rear mech, because they rotate in inefficient bushings, and replace them with a set that uses ball bearings.'

Jason's final tip on the subject is possibly his best – and certainly his cheapest. In fact, it's free. Sure, if world records are your goal and marginal gains keep you awake at night you can always splash out on pricy ceramic bearings. But for us mere mortals, with mortgages and kids, absorb this great truth: 'Never cross your chain from the smallest chainring to the smallest sprocket or from the largest chainring to largest sprocket. The friction losses alone will burn your muscles.'

Simple when you know how, isn't it? 
Max Glaskin is a freelance journalist and author of Cycling Science. He holds back nothing when tweeting as @CyclingScience1.

Tucking the rear wheel into the seat tube reduces turbulence, while the bike's overall shape encourages an aero riding position.

The bomber-style detachable nosecone doesn't just hold snacks and supplies, it also lowers drag generated across the entire frame.

The blade fork has an extreme aerofoil profile with a 5:1 (width:depth) ratio – definitely not allowed in UCI races but fine in triathlon.

The front brake is hidden from the wind behind the fork, while the rear is under the bottom bracket behind an aerodynamic fairing.

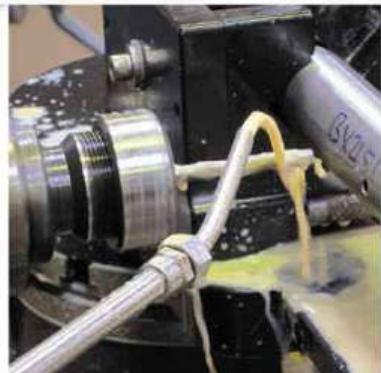
The wheels are surprisingly basic but at this level, most triathletes will already have deep-rim race wheels with low rolling resistance tyres.



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A GENTLEMAN'S GUIDE TO THE ROAD



Good manners, sporting behaviour or just common politeness – call it what you will, but observing proper road etiquette will make a true cyclist of you, sir!

WORDS **TREVOR WARD**
ILLUSTRATIONS **KEVIN FEBRUARY**

Some riders are better than others, but we can all learn a thing or two when it comes to the gentlemanly code of conduct that surrounds cycling. Whether it's clearing your nose or closing the gap, behaving properly on your bike will earn you the respect of fellow cyclists and road users.

no.1

RULES OF THE ROAD

Every time you swing a leg over your top tube, you are representing cyclists everywhere

DIRTY OR BADLY MAINTAINED BIKE

A dirty bike may just about be forgivable if it's because you've been too busy riding it to clean it, but creaking frames, rattling chains or, as reader Jonathan Day puts it, 'a freewheel that sounds like a chainsaw' are like the wheezing gasps of an elderly relative – slightly alarming and highly irritating.



ACKNOWLEDGING OTHER CYCLISTS

It's amazing how a simple nod of the head or wave is beyond so many riders. 'This should be a basic social skill,' says reader Holger Fröning. 'If you say "Hi" to me, then I feel it's perfectly OK to wheelsuck me without asking.'

Movistar pro and former Hour record holder Alex Dowsett agrees, and often suffers a backlash when he forgets to do it himself. 'In Italy, no one acknowledges each other because there are so many riders on the road. Maybe England is starting to go that way,' he says. 'If I'm out

I always try to acknowledge others. Sometimes when training I've been doing an effort fully tucked in and I get an angry tweet that someone was disappointed I didn't acknowledge them. I think acknowledgements should be made, but don't take it personally if they're not.'

IGNORING RIDERS IN NEED OF HELP

Even if your own mechanical or tube-changing skills are severely lacking, at least show willing. The gesture will be appreciated by a rider who's probably having a much worse day than you.

DONNING MUDGUARDS

The height of courtesy when riding with a group during winter, when the roads get wet and gritty. Without them, you should either stay at the back or volunteer to do everyone else's laundry at the end of the ride.

RIDING UP THE INSIDE WITHOUT WARNING

Inconsiderate, lazy and dangerous. And against the Highway Code. If you do it to another rider, expect to get some harsh words. If you do it to a tipper lorry at a junction, expect it to be the last mistake you make on a bike.



THANKING MARSHALS AT SPORTIVES

Entry fee: £60.
Travel and overnight accommodation: £150.
Shouting 'Thanks' to a volunteer who has been standing at the junction in the pouring rain for the last four hours: priceless. Besides, it only takes a second.

FLASHING LIGHTS

Really, just because it's a bit overcast? If you wanted to disrupt the natural beauty and simplicity of the countryside you're riding through, you could have just driven a Citroën Berlingo.

HOGGING THE ROAD

Riding two or three-abreast is the sociable thing to do on group rides, but if it means you hold up traffic behind you, go single file until the road clears. Courtesy to other road users should be standard policy.

LITTERING Just because you're living out your pro rider fantasies during a sportive doesn't give you the right to throw empty gel wrappers onto the road. 'If you need to take it with you then you need to take it home, too!' says reader Stuart Brierley. Bear in mind that littering is a crime punishable by an on-the-spot fine.



no.2

CAFÉ ETIQUETTE

The coffee stop is part of the ride, so rules still apply

SPRINTING FOR THE CAFÉ

We understand why you do it – to avoid getting stuck at the back of the self-service queue – but it's ungentlemanly on all kinds of levels. Frankly, it's something you might expect from Italians or Spaniards ('queuing' is a fluid concept among our Mediterranean cousins) but not a Brit steeped in the chivalric values of Tom Simpson or Sir Bradley Wiggins.

PUTTING A WET, SMELLY HELMET OR GLOVES ON THE TABLE

You wouldn't put your chamois pad on the table, so why would you place those other repositories of sweat, bacteria and odour in such close proximity to your tea and cake?

Alex Dowsett is a self-confessed café addict and a regular at the Blue Egg in Essex where he knows the staff well. 'They get really good business from cyclists and are very welcoming,' he says, 'but one of the girls said she had a guy at the till who wiped his sweaty, snotty nose with his hand and then pulled out his change and gave it to her. She was mortified. I think that's where a bit of respect has to come in.'

TOO MUCH TALK ABOUT BIKES, CYCLING, STRAVA ETC...

Just because we enjoy riding, that doesn't mean we want to talk about it all the time. Someone who goes on about the latest segments they have bagged is almost as dull as the guy who tells you about the dream they had last night. Let's widen the conversation occasionally. →

no.3

GROUP RIDING

A peloton is a mini-society, and all societies need rules to function...

Riding in a bunch is all about looking out for your companions as much as yourself.

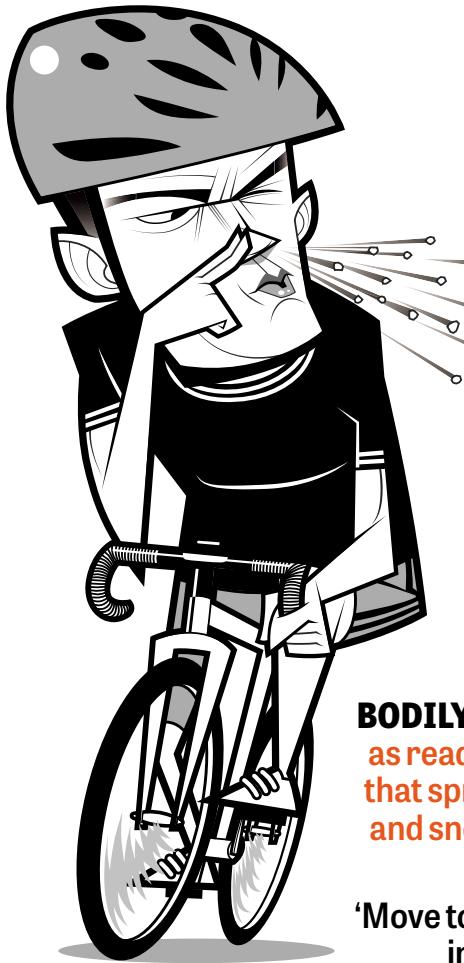
Former national road race and hill climb champion Dan Fleeman says amateurs can learn a lot from the mutual respect shown by pro riders.

'They might be on a contract worth two or three million quid a year but they aren't prepared to kill someone to win a race,' he says. 'Whereas in amateur crits I've seen some dreadful pile-ups, and all they are racing for is an inner tube!'

Alex Dowsett, who has suffered his fair share of crashes, agrees, saying, 'Lead-outs are the most hectic part, everyone rides as close as they possibly can, but with an element of respect.'

If someone's gettingairy, bashing handlebars and pulling some really dangerous manoeuvres, then he'll be made aware quite quickly by the others that he's going to wipe someone out.'

With all that in mind, then, here is *BikeEtc*'s guide to some of the more common crimes against group riding etiquette.



WHEELSUCKING OR DRAFTING

This was one of the most common complaints when we put the subject of etiquette up for debate on the *BikesEtc* Facebook page. Nadia Younan from Sydney summed it up best when she said, 'People who draft you and just sit there for kilometre after kilometre and say nothing – it's like a random person just came and sat at your table without introducing themselves to you.'

'There's nothing worse than going out for a 60-mile ride with someone and they sit on your wheel all the way until the final bit when they start attacking,' says Dan Fleeman, who

is now a full-time coach (digdeepcoaching.com). 'Just take your turns at the front instead.'

In some circumstances, however, wheelsucking can be acceptable. Alex Dowsett still regularly rides with his dad at his local club, Glendene CC in Essex, and says, 'Some treat it as their weekly World Championships. My dad's not strong or fast enough to keep up with them but he'll still want to do his turn on the front, and I keep telling him, "You're almost twice the age of the other guys so you're perfectly within your rights to sit on and shelter among the wheels."

HALF-WHEELING

Not to be confused with the more dangerous practise of overlapping, this is more rude than risky. If you've agreed to ride at a steady tempo, two-abreast, then having the rider next to you continually nudging half a wheel ahead is irritating.

'A lot of it is down to egos, people wanting to show off how strong they are,' says Dowsett, who this month is hosting two coached rides with *cyclism.com*. 'When I go on club runs, if someone starts half-wheeling me I just stick to the pace that I think the club will be happy with. Eventually they end up on the front on their own and left looking a bit silly.'

BODILY FUNCTIONS We're talking specifically about 'snot rockets' – or, as reader Lee Gosden puts it, 'The phlegm shower from a rider in front that spreads into a fine mist for everyone behind to breathe in.' Spitting and snotting in close proximity to fellow riders shows scant respect to them and to the sport. We're not footballers, after all.

'Move to the side of the group, but make sure the wind won't blow it back into the group,' says Fleeman. 'If in doubt, drop to the back.'

SAFE WORDS

Here are some key phrases every gentleman cyclist should know to keep them safe on the road

CAR BACK/UP!

Warning of car approaching from behind/in front.

PUNCTURE! An excuse for those at the front to accelerate and pretend they didn't hear, and those at the back to stop and have a rest.

NO DROP

Refers to a ride where no one will be left behind. Sometimes it's best to ask for it in writing.

INSIDE! Coming through on your left whether you like it or not. Best used in a slightly panicky tone.

RECOVERY RIDE

Beware these words if uttered by your club secretary. He'll want to rip your legs off.

TEMPO Steady, regular rate, though usually not steady or regular enough for half-wheelers.

STRAVA SEGMENT HUNTING

Unless specified segments are agreed in advance, this will reduce the fluid dynamics of the peloton to an unsightly mess, like a blanmange on a skateboard.

OVERLAPPING

If your front wheel is continually overlapping the rear wheel of the rider in front, it's going to end in tears if they suddenly swerve in front of you. And the laws of physics mean they'll more than likely be your tears.

TAKING BOTH HANDS OFF THE HANDLEBARS

In a bunch, this is about as advisable as wearing a Hitler costume to a fancy dress ball. Don't do it. Yes, you've seen Peter Sagan deftly remove his rain cape and consume a three-course meal while travelling at 45kmh in the middle of the peloton, but he's also World Champion, while we're mere mortals whose equilibrium is more prone to a gust of wind, pothole or rider braking in front. If you really feel the need to relinquish complete control of your handlebars, then either drop to the back of the bunch or pull over to the side of the road (making clear your intentions first).

ACCELERATING WHEN IT'S YOUR TURN TO TAKE A PULL

It's great that you're taking your turn at the front of the bunch and not hiding among the wheels (see Wheelsucking), but please don't go and ruin it all with some macho display of speed.

'I've been in chain gangs where there are riders who are obviously really strong, but they have no actual riding skills,' says Fleeman. 'They'll take their pull at the front but then just keep on accelerating even when they've switched to the slow line. That just rips the whole group apart.'

SAYING IT'S A SOCIAL RIDE

And then riding threshold until everyone is a broken mess. The technical term for this is 'lying'.



POINTING OUT OF POTHOLE/HAZARDS

Probably one of the oldest forms of etiquette in existence, dating back to the days when wheelmen astride penny farthings would blow bugles to warn of oncoming stagecoaches or farm animals. Despite this, it's often not executed as smoothly as it should be. The temptation is for a rider not to repeat the warning shouted from the front because he believes the riders behind have heard or seen it.

Imagine if every rider thought that – the warning would never be passed down the line and carnage would ensue. A warning, whether by action or words, should ripple down the length of the line so that no rider is left in any doubt of the hazard ahead.

TOO MUCH POINTING OUT OF POTHOLE/HAZARDS

The riders at the front should show common sense about which hazards need pointing out. None of us expects silky smooth surfaces or precision-engineered cambers on British roads. If it's a bit of uneven tarmac, ride through it. If it's a pothole requiring evasive action, send a warning down the line. If the bunch is a blur of twitching, pointing and shouting, it makes us look like an outing from social services rather than the pro-looking peloton we aspire to be.



CLOTHING

Badly-chosen bibs have the power to offend

WEARING RAINBOW BANDS

Unless you're a child, wearing a replica leader's or champion's jersey is just asking for trouble. 'One of our coaches is Colin Sturgess [1989 individual pursuit world champion] and he says no one should be wearing the World Champion's stripes unless they've earned them,' says Fleeman.

Current Commonwealth and four-times national TT champion Dowsett, however, is more forgiving. He says, 'People buy Movistar kits because they're fans of the team. If people buy the national TT champion's jersey because they're fans of what I've done, I think that's brilliant.'

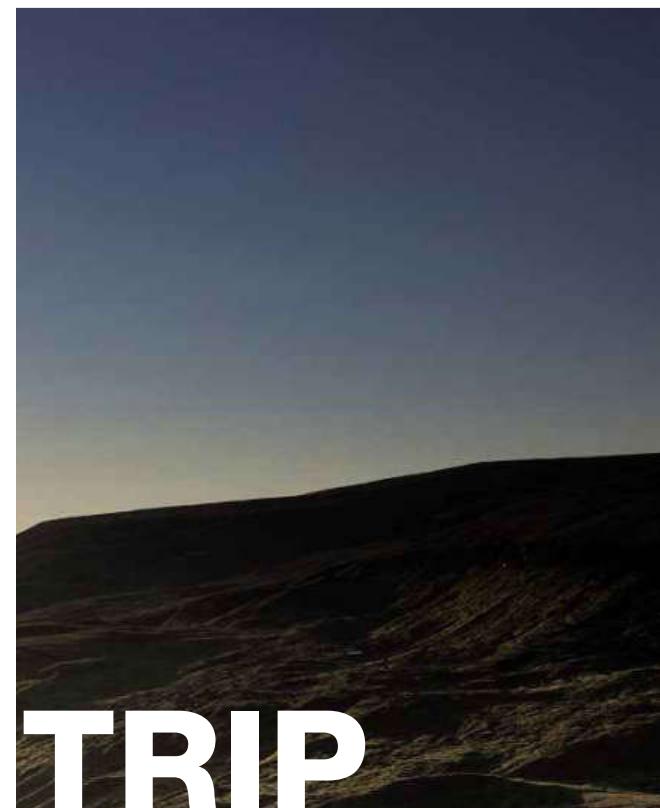
WEARING WHITE SHORTS

They may look good on Peter Sagan in the heat of the Abu Dhabi desert, but trust us, they won't look as good on you on a wet day on the A41. Spare a thought for the rider behind. ☺





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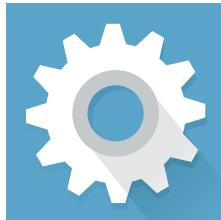


lookcycle.com

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ReviewsEtc

Whether you're after a bike, components or clothing, the *BikesEtc* expert testers have put the latest gear through its paces to find what's right for you

PHOTOGRAPHY HENRY CARTER, JENNIE LESKINEN



Bibtights
p64



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Winter tyres
p72



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Bike locks
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Bike computers
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£2,000 Ultegra bikes
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THE AWARDS



Best Value

The winner of this award may not have the highest overall score in the test, and it may not be the cheapest, but it will always represent especially good performance at its price.



BikesEtc BEST IN TEST

Best In Test

The overall winner in each group test. Scoring highly in all criteria, it will be an excellent all-rounder. Where two or more items achieve equally high scores, it will be the one that has that extra something – a touch of style, a special feature – that takes the prize.



BikesEtc Gold Award

This prestigious award goes to bikes, accessories, components or items of apparel with exceptional levels of performance, design and build quality that make them must-haves. Don't expect to see it every issue – we only hand it out when it's truly deserved.

TIGHT SPOT

Warm legs are happy legs, so here are 10 pairs of thermal bibtights to keep winter chills at bay

 There's an old saying in cycling – if it's cold enough for sleeves, it's cold enough for knees. When the mercury begins to drop, your lower limbs, in particular your knees, become increasingly vulnerable to the cold weather – and that can mean excess wear and tear. So don't delay in donning some thermal tights to keep your legs protected from that nasty Jack Frost fella. Staying warm down below will not only help to keep muscles and joints working more efficiently, but also lower your risk of injury – meaning no enforced time out of the saddle.

But more importantly, it means the cold can't hold you back. Squeeze yourself into a nice snug pair of bibtights, make sure the rest of you is similarly covered in winter-defeating clobber rather than goosebumps, and do what you love doing most – riding your bike!

Altura Peloton NV Windproof £79.99

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'The perfect partner for cooler cycles, offering wind protection and thermal insulation combined with the new NV360 degree reflectivity offering comfort and visibility.'

WHAT WE SAY: The feeling next to skin wasn't as immediately cosy with these as the brushed Roubaix fleece fabric of others. Out on the road though, the Peloton was one of the warmest tights on test. It proved to be highly wind and water-resistant, qualities that usually have an impact on flexibility and comfort, but that simply wasn't the case here.

altura.co.uk

Verdict
Tough tights that'll perform at their best in the toughest conditions.



OVERALL
7
10



OVERALL
7
10

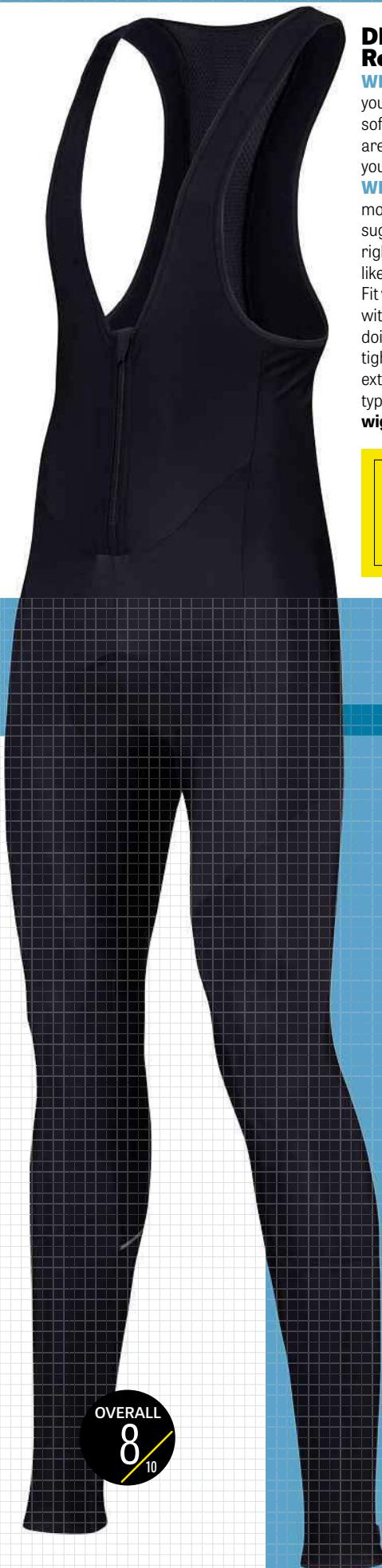
Endura Thermolite £72.99

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: Offers 'ultimate weather comfort with durable water repellency'.

WHAT WE SAY: A feeling of high-quality materials and construction, with sensible seam placement avoiding kneecaps and other areas of tension. Padded insert felt quite dense, and comfortable with plenty of stretch. Foot loops are a personal choice, but Endura has shown consideration by reducing the thickness of the material. Fit was good, although things got a bit drafty in the riding position due to some excess material around the midriff.

endurasport.com

Verdict
These are seriously warm and will cope well with the worst of the British winter.



DHB Classic Roubaix £55

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'Giving you snug warmth from their super-soft Lombardia Roubaix Lycra, these are the perfect companion for all your cold season rides.'

WHAT WE SAY: These feel much more expensive than the price tag suggests. Designed so the tights zip right up to your sternum, it's almost like wearing an additional mid-layer. Fit was good, with plenty of stretch, with the ankle zips and grippers doing a good job of holding the tights securely in place at the lower extremity. The padded insert was typically high quality.

wiggle.co.uk

Verdict
Great tights which are best suited to seriously cold conditions.



Madison Sportive Fjord DWR £74.99

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'Perfect for the cooler or damp ride, the Sportive Fjord bib tights keep the chill out without overheating.'

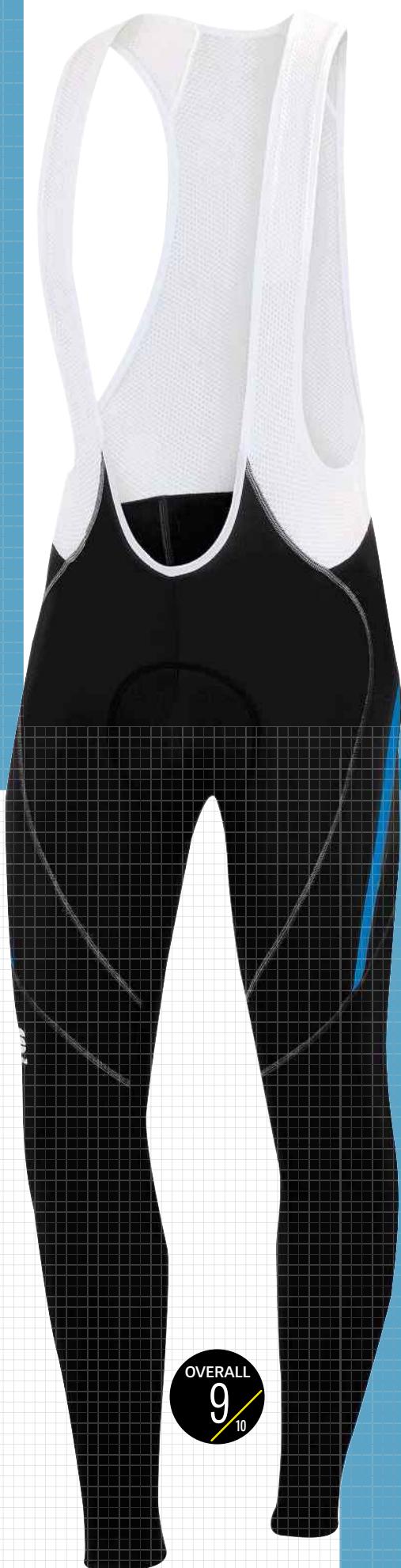
WHAT WE SAY: In a wet ride these performed well, beading water droplets and rapidly shedding them. The tights are multi-panelled and pre-curved for a close fit, while the 4G Race gel pad offers a good balance of density and comfort. It also stayed put, as did the ankles, held by wide silicone-backed elasticated cuffs, giving a feeling of solidarity with the pad and tights as a whole.

madison.cc

Verdict
A great choice for those cold damp winter days ahead.

OVERALL
8
10

OVERALL
9
10



Sportful Gruppetto £90

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'Designed to protect the rider during the winter season, it boasts an ergonomic cut that offers excellent fit [plus] excellent thermal insulation.'

WHAT WE SAY: Claims of this being a no-nonsense product focused on functionality really ring true on the road. The fit is typically Italian and quite racy, so expect these to be more figure-hugging than others. Perhaps consider a size larger than you'd normally wear. Get that right and the quality fabric and panelling will ensure you'll barely be aware you're wearing them.

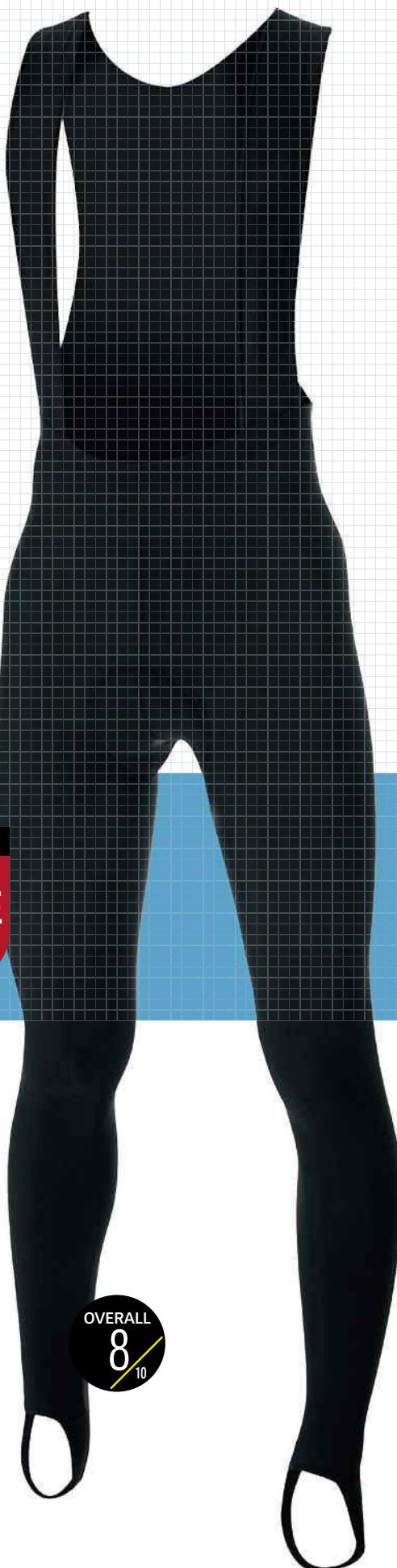
c3products.com

Verdict

The most expensive in on test, but the pad was the best we tried.

BikesEtc

BEST
VALUE



Vermarc Super Roubaix £58.99

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY:

'The perfect warm-up garment.'

WHAT WE SAY: Vermarc's OmniForm 3D pad is the key feature of these tights, a lightweight, one-piece construction with an antibacterial treatment. Low on bulk, it still offers plenty of comfort and shock absorbency on the bike. There are fewer panels than on most of the other tights here, which means fewer seams. The brushed Roubaix fabric feels high quality with plenty of stretch and an excellent fit. Being quite thin, though, you might struggle for warmth on the coldest days.

chickencycles.co.uk

Verdict

A top-quality winter thermal garment at a hugely competitive price.

Specialized RBX Comp £69.99

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'Made of soft and resistant Lombardia fleece [that] stretches in two directions for comfort and easy care.'

WHAT WE SAY: As soon as you pull these on for the first time, you can feel the quality. Plenty of give means the fit stays contoured all over. On the road, movement feels superb, with zero sense of restriction. The sewn seams of the padded insert caused a little rubbing on the rear edges

during the first ride out, but after a wash or two, it softened up. After that they became super-comfortable.

specialized.com

Verdict

Tough tights that perform at their best in the very worst of conditions



WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN BUYING TIGHTS

Avoid the pitfalls for a good fit and proper protection

Chamois or no chamois?

There has always been some debate over whether bibtights should have a pad or not. Riders who are on the bike day-in-day-out may prefer not to have a pad, so they can simply wear them over shorts – of which riders generally own several pairs. The shorts can then be washed after use while the tights can manage more than one day in the saddle.

Windproofing/Waterproofing

These are often coatings or additional panels in key areas such as the front of the thighs, or lower back, to increase protection. Sometimes a godsend, but equally not always necessary. It can affect breathability and flexibility of the garment so there may be some trade-offs to consider, and unless temperatures get really cold you may find these a touch too warm at times.

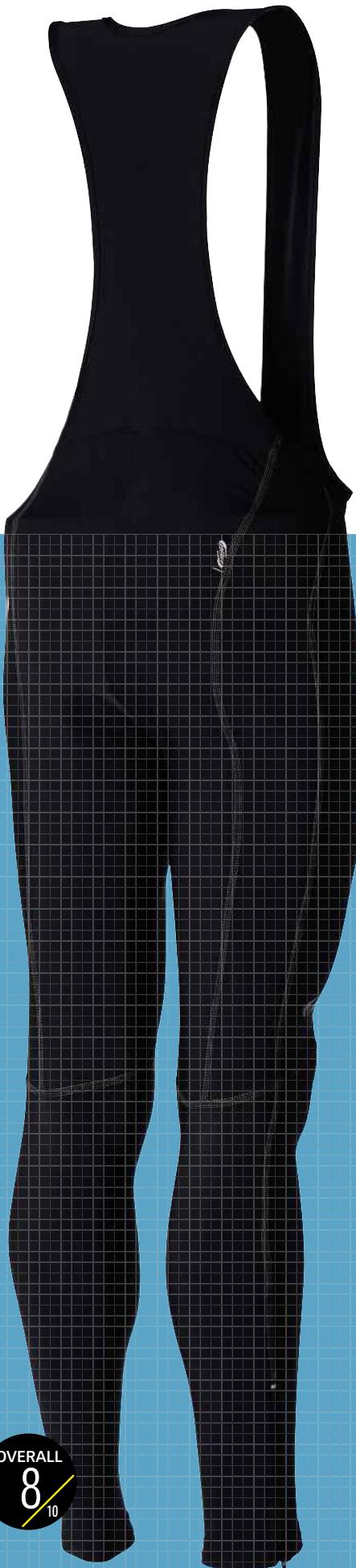
Roubaix

This is the fabric of choice for almost all bibtights – a low-bulk Lycra fabric with a brushed-fleece backing so it feels very warm and comfortable next to the skin, with varying levels of stretch depending on the thickness and quality. Also very breathable to manage heat build-up and moisture transfer. It performs well wet or dry and is the go-to fabric for bibtights.

Foot Loops

A personal preference, but a foot loop will ensure the tights cannot ride up at the lower extremity, leaving you with chilly ankles. It can feel uncomfortable in a shoe, though, particularly if you have close-fitting moulded insoles.



OVERALL
8
10**BBB Quadra £79.99**

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'Warm thermal cycling tights with a thermo fabric construction for lightweight insulation on cold winter road rides.'

WHAT WE SAY: A highly panelled construction give these a contoured, snug feel. With no seams on the inside of the thighs, chafing against the saddle is eradicated – good for both comfort and wear and tear. The shoulder straps felt a little slack and the back did sag slightly. But this was hardly a deal breaker. The padded insert initially felt stiff, but softened nicely after a few washes.

windwave.co.uk

Verdict

Overall one of the preferred designs. An extremely well thought-out product.

'Lusso's 360° reflectivity is the headline feature here. It works well, and looks great!'

OVERALL
9
10**BikesEtc****BEST IN TEST****Lusso Nitelife £79.99**

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'Reflective for safety, thermal fabric.'

WHAT WE SAY: Lusso's 360° reflectivity is the headline feature here. It works impressively well, especially as it looks good by day too. Made in the UK, Lusso uses quality Italian fabrics, and the fit was one of the best on test. The material hugs the contours of the legs well, and leaves no excess to ruck or cause irritation. Lusso has opted for foot loops, but they're barely noticeable, with the benefit being that the tights will never ride up.

lusso.bike

Verdict

Quality features, construction and fit, at a great price.

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COLD WEATHER CAPS

A warm head makes for a happy ride so stick one of these under your helmet when out on the bike this winter

 When we were kids, our mums made us wear woolly hats when it was cold, citing the well-known fact that 50 per cent of body heat is lost through our heads. Sadly, it turns out our mums were wrong (but only on this matter).

Research from Indiana University in the United States proves that your head is no more susceptible to heat loss than any other part of your body, but that's no reason to suffer with frozen ears. This lot will keep your head snug on the coldest of rides.

1 Rapha Winter Hat £40 rapha.cc

Like all things Rapha, this cap oozes class, though you'll struggle to find a helmet to match the colour (it comes in black or grey as well). It's pretty bulky, so not easy to squeeze under a helmet, and almost too warm for all but the most Baltic conditions. It also soaks up rain like a sponge.

2 Castelli Difesa Cap £35 saddleback.co.uk

Made from the same stuff as Castelli's popular Gabba jersey, this cap will repel rain and wind, and it won't boil your head when you're working hard on the bike. It's stretchy enough that one size fits all, and thin enough to fit easily under a helmet. The reflective panel under the visor is a nice touch.

3 Vulpine Thermal Storm Cap £35 vulpine.cc

The chunkiest cap on test, it only just squeezes under a helmet with much adjusting of straps. Its fleece inner and nylon outer make it warm and robust, but its bright colour and reflective strip make it more suited for wearing (whisper it) without a helmet.

4 Madison Isoler Merino Winter Cap £17.99 madison.cc

This slim cap fits well under a helmet, and although it's not particularly wind or water-resistant, the merino wool means it stays warm even when damp. It gets extra praise for being machine-washable. At this price, it represents excellent value too.

5 Sealskinz Belgian Style Cycling Cap £28 sealskinz.com

A fleece liner and a wind/waterproof layer make this warm and weather-resistant. However, it's bulky and the stretchy upper layer slips down when squashed into a helmet, making for an uncomfortable fit and a restricted view, as the peak won't flip up.

6 Swrve Softshell Belgian Cap £28 swrve.co.uk

The softshell upper is velvety on the inside, wind and rain-repellent on the outside, but it's not very stretchy so be careful to get the right fit. The fleecy ear flaps feel luxuriously cosy, but can lead to overheating when the pace gets up. One for the grottiest days.



OVERALL
9
10



OVERALL
7
10





3

OVERALL
6
10

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OVERALL
7
10

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OVERALL
5
10

8

OVERALL
8
10

8

Giro Merino Winter Cap £34.99 zyro.co.uk

Thin and light, this is for chilly rather than sub-zero days, but it does fit easily under a helmet. The X-Static liner prevents your head getting itchy and the whole thing can be easily stashed away in a pocket if the temperature rises. Neat, simple and effective.

7

OVERALL
8
10

It's a myth that you lose 50% of your body heat through your head but that's no reason to suffer frozen ears

WINTER TYRES

Keep yourself rubber side down this winter with our guide to the best tyres for mixed conditions.

How often has the promise of a crisp and clear morning lured you out into the cold only to suddenly morph into a wet and blustery afternoon? Not that there isn't plenty of good riding to be had throughout the darker months, it just pays to be prepared for the changeable conditions of this time of year.

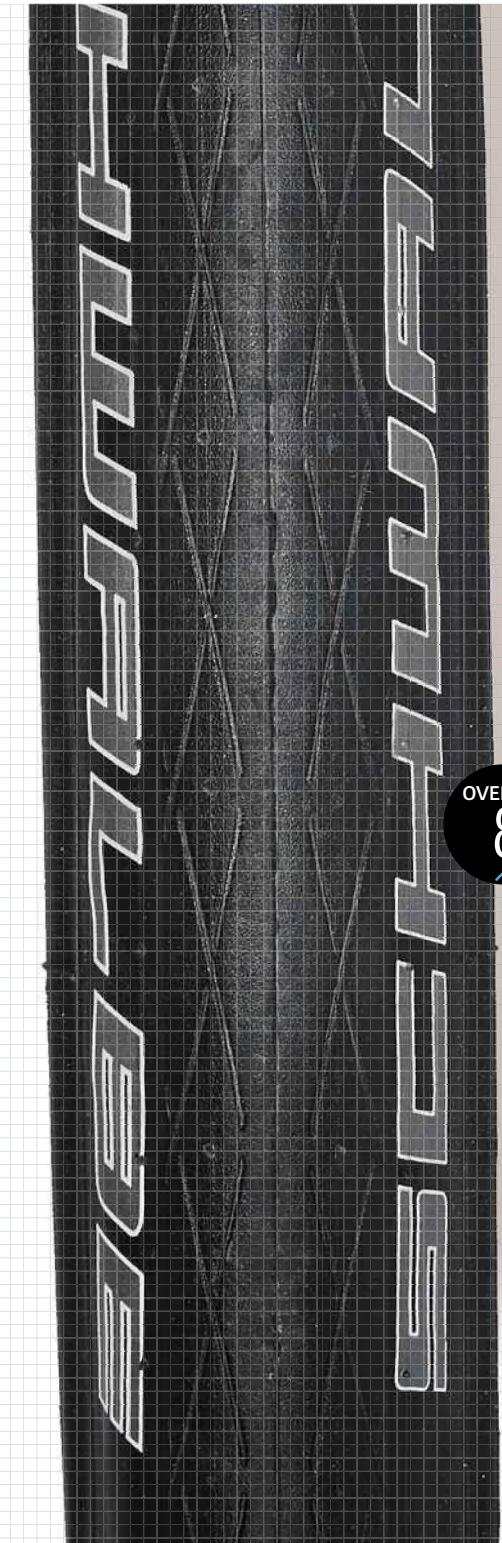
Along with rain and frost, leaves on the ground and mud on the roads mean your tyres will be working even harder to fend off punctures and keep you from sliding out over the coming months. Fitted in a wider size and with grippy all-weather rubber compounds choosing the right ones will help you battle though till summer. Just don't think they have to be heavy and dull, there's plenty of great options for race heads, too!

Schwalbe Durano £33

Hard rubber down the centre of the tread means excellent durability while softer material at the edges provides cornering grip. That's the theory and we won't argue. Having picked almost no flats across the previous winter they were still looking fresh come the spring, showing only minimal wear. Ride quality is fairly good and they're not too costly. Plenty to like.
schwalbe.co.uk

Verdict

A perennial favourite. Sacrifice a little performance and you'll gain a ton of durability.



OVERALL

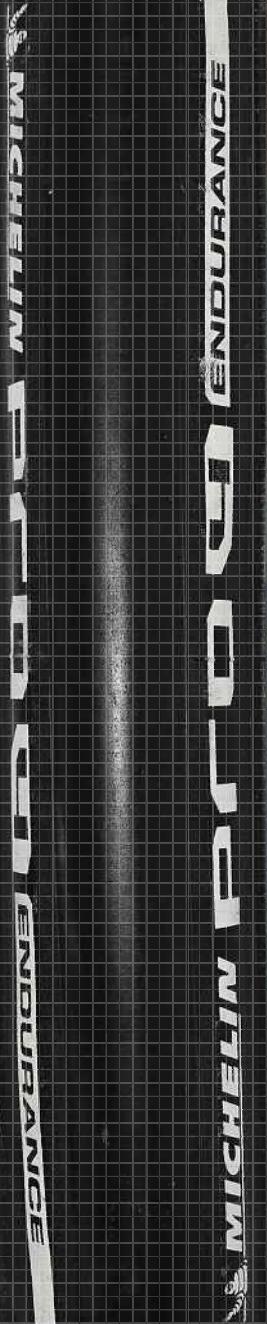
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Michelin Pro 4 Endurance £41

Although heavier than some tyres, this doesn't seem to slow down the Michelin. Coming up quite wide, the extra mass is also due to the enhanced puncture protection that covers the span of the tyre. It seems to work. The tread itself is also super durable without giving away any grip, meaning fewer worries about either slipping or flatting.
todayscyclist.co.uk

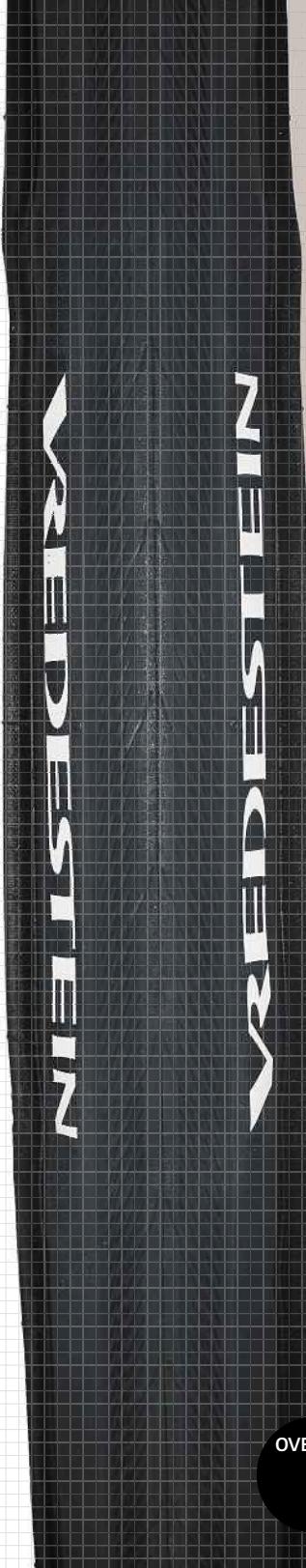
Verdict

Cheap for a high performance tyre, their reliability and weight belies a surprisingly racy disposition.



OVERALL

9
10



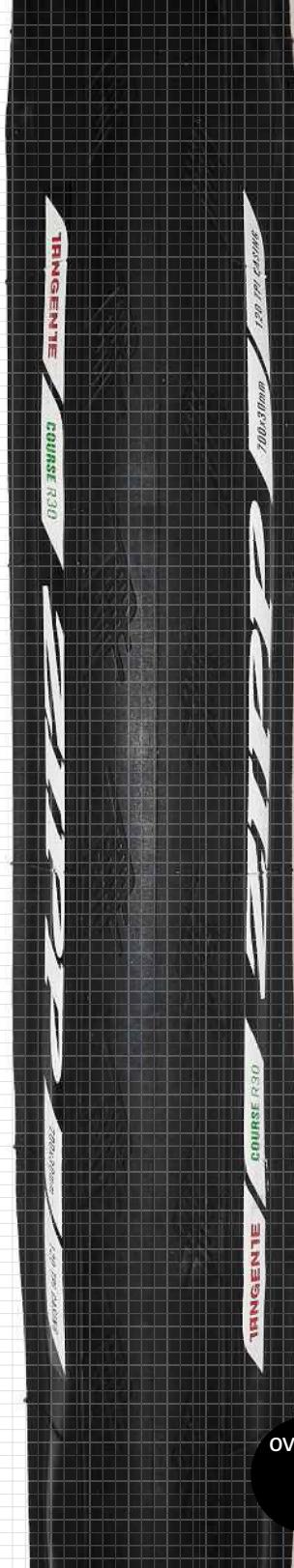
OVERALL
7
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Vredestein Fortezza Senso X-treme Weather £50

Still at the quicker end of the spectrum, these aren't among the fastest, perhaps due to their low thread count (120tpi). Luckily the foul weather compound sticks admirably when cornering or under braking, making crossing slick cobbles or road markings a less hairy experience than on most tyres. saddleback.co.uk

Verdict

Plentiful wet weather traction, although at this price we would have liked them a touch quicker.



OVERALL
7
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Zipp Tangente Course R30 £44

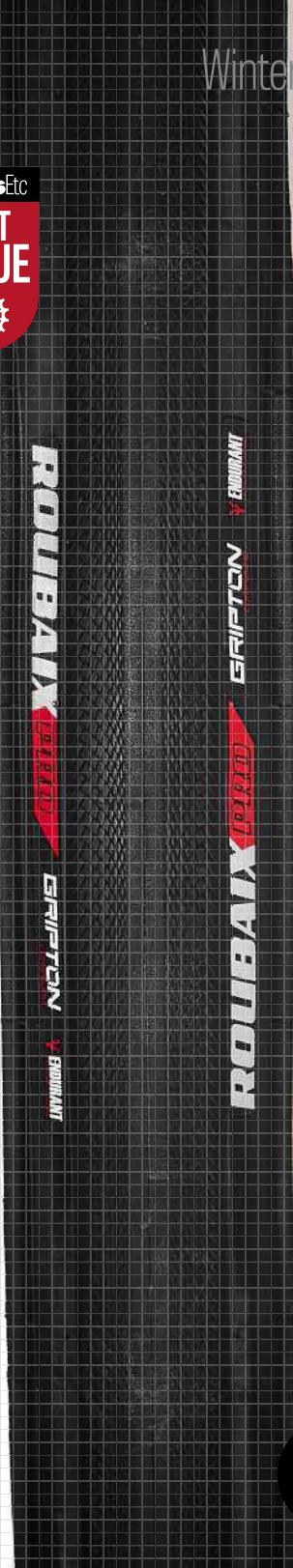
To match their wide aero rims, Zipp has created a range of equally wide tyres. Surprisingly eager to whip up to speed, thanks to their low weight, their bulbous size ensures a comfortable ride when the going gets choppy. The initially plentiful grip does seem to drop off in the wet compared to some of the other tyres on test though. fisheroutdoor.co.uk

Verdict

Speedy and comfortable, although wet weather traction could be better.



BikesEtc
**BEST
VALUE**



OVERALL
9
10

Specialized Roubaix Pro £25

Although nominally a 23mm tyre with a narrow contact patch, the Roubaix Pro uses a higher volume carcass to provide additional comfort (it measures closer to 25mm in width). They're very tough indeed while remarkably still grippy and not too much of a drag on tarmac, making them a fantastic winter workhorse. specialized.com

Verdict

Hard-wearing and versatile at a great price. High volume fends off pinch punctures.





Panaracer Gravel King £30

Visually similar to the Vittoria or Challenge tyres, these are far tougher customers. Designed to withstand the rigours of off-road riding, they'll take a thrashing without picking up too many cuts or punctures. The flip side of this is that with a stiffer carcass, they don't have quite the plush ride feel we'd like on the road.

zyro.co.uk

Verdict

Tough customers that are happy to head off-road. Just don't expect super-low rolling resistance.

OVERALL
7
10

Continental Grand Prix 4 Season £55

Compared to some more voluminous tyres, these came up on the small side, despite being nominally 28mm wide, so it could be worth going up a size. Puncture resistance is way above that offered by the fastest race tyres yet rolling resistance feels pretty similar. Grip is excellent, particularly in the wet. Not cheap but you get what you pay for.

conti-tyres.co.uk

Verdict

Puncture resistant with plenty of wet weather grip and low rolling resistance, the complete package.

OVERALL
9
10

Vittoria Open Pave GC £42

A clincher version of the peloton's favourite spring Classics tyre. The file tread pattern might be a placebo when it comes to generating grip but the excellent rubber compound and supple casing mean they provide plentiful traction regardless. Like all truly fast tyres they're a little puncture prone, but not enough to put us off.

chickencycles.co.uk

Verdict

A true Classics tyre. Performance to rival the best in any category, yet they remain moderately robust.

OVERALL
8
10



Challenge Paris Roubaix Open £52

These beautiful hand-made tyres arrive flat, adding to the feeling that you're onto something a bit different. A chunky 27mm wide, they gobble up cobbles. Unvulcanised rubber provides exceptional grip and keep the bike planted by softening vibrations. Somewhat prone to penetration punctures, they're best saved for special occasions. paligap.cc

Verdict

A tyre to tame the cobbles of the spring Classics. Shame they're a bit fragile for everyday riding.

Maxxis Re-Fuse £33

A little chunky in terms of weight and based around a carcass with a fairly low thread count, the Re-Fuse definitely lacks the zippy feel of some of the others on test. While we didn't manage to pierce its two separate layers of puncture protection during testing we still felt it was undercut by the Specialized and out performed by the Schwalbe. Still a decent choice if you can get them cheap.  extrauk.co.uk

Verdict

Not bad and robust enough for winter, just a tad uninspiring compared to the competition.

TURBO TRAINERS

We test six great-value turbos that'll burn your legs muscles, not your wallet

 It's that time of year: the mercury is dropping and the nights are drawing in. If you'd rather not fork out on winter gear or fix mudguards to your pride and joy, turbo training is a viable way to keep fit until spring.

Whether your goal is to use long, steady sessions to preserve your base fitness or build top-end power through intense intervals, a turbo can provide a simple, low-maintenance solution to keep you competitive.

Many manufacturers now employ a 'trickle-down' strategy. The high-quality but expensive fluid and magnetic resistance know-how of a few years ago is now available at great-value prices, making it a great time to buy a trainer on a tight budget. So we've tested six trainers around the £150 mark to help you decide which should be that crucial addition to your pain cave.



Elite Novo Force £150

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'Maximum stability at maximum effort. Two quick-release clamps for easy fixing of the back wheel. Magnetic resistance flywheel gives realistic road feel with five levels of adjustment.'

WHAT WE SAY: The Novo Force takes some setting up, but once assembled the plastic fairings covering the frame give it a premium look and sturdy feel, while keeping it light enough to be easily portable. The ElastoGel roller is great – providing a smooth ride feel over a good spread of resistance settings. It also came out as the quietest on test. Surprisingly, however, the powerful resistance levels are undermined by a mild lack of stability that keeps you reserved when working out of the saddle.

madison.co.uk

Verdict

Easy to set up and transport. Looks flashy and performs well, just don't thrash about.

**JetBlack M5 Pro Mag £175**

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'Five magnetic resistance settings to accurately recreate a range of different life-like situations. Hydrogel roller provides a super-smooth tyre contact.'

WHAT WE SAY: Strikingly coloured, the Mag Pro certainly stands out but its build quality backs-up its lairy appearance. Ride feel is particularly smooth and progressive. Combined with the ergonomically shaped adjuster dial, giving you lots of resistance options, the Pro Mag is great for every type of session. One caveat however: it emits a very distinctive, loud sound even when pedaling normally, that only increases as you put down more power. It's a great trainer – if you've got great neighbours!

chickencycles.co.uk

Verdict

Great ride feel but strangely noisy. The resistance lever is particularly well designed.



'Sleek lines create a futuristic look that's a real step forward in terms of turbo design'



BikesEtc

BEST IN TEST

Verdict
A few small niggles away from being absolutely bang on.

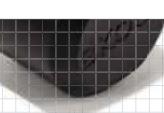
BKool One £165

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'Combining simulator connectivity with magnetic resistance that follows a progressive resistance curve, the harder you pedal the more resistance is added.'

WHAT WE SAY: Sleek lines create a futuristic look that's a step forward in turbo design. The ability to hook it up to a simulator is an unheard of feature at this price. The lack of a bolt-action skewer clamp make set-up fiddly, and despite its sturdy construction the tripod could be a bit more stable when out of the saddle.

That said, the ride feel is smooth and an 11-speed drivetrain will provide enough gears for any session. Finally the smart design means it's neat when packed away, if you choose not to display it as an art work.

i-ride.co.uk





CycleOps Tempo Fluid £160

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'A great value entry-level fluid trainer. The progressive resistance gives life-like road feel.'

WHAT WE SAY: The simple assembly and robust construction mean this may not be pretty but it's pretty damned good at what it does, enabling important parts, like the flywheel, to be decent quality without pushing up the price. The design of its bolt-action skewer clamp is the best on test, and makes fitting your bike simple, while neat touches like the rotatable, variable-thickness footpads ensure it's secure. The only fluid trainer on test (a rarity at this price), its resistance level increases as you pedal harder. It's not particularly noisy and it packs away neatly. A truly solid package.

paligap.co.uk

Verdict

You can't go far wrong with this excellent all-round performer.

Minoura B60 R £150

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'New entry-level magnetic trainer. Simplified U-shape steel frame supports up to 120kg but is light and compact enough for easy storage.'

WHAT WE SAY: This trainer is so pared down that first impressions have you doubting the B60's performance, but you needn't worry. Out of the box it's simple to get up and running. This is another turbo best used in conjunction with a mat to dampen vibrations, but it remains quiet and stable if you push out of the saddle.

Seven levels of resistance provide plenty of difficulty, with pedalling feeling smooth until the very top-end, where it got a little choppy. Concentrate on smooth revolutions, and this modest trainer proves a capable companion in your fitness quest.

zyro.co.uk

Verdict

Looks basic but does a surprisingly good job. Never judge a trainer by its looks!

BikesEtc





GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR TURBO

Keeping yourself motivated is half the battle when it comes to time on the turbo.



1 Leave your turbo ready in the morning and your commute home can form a warm up, allowing you to jump straight into a high-intensity workout. You won't need to change either.

2 Music's a great motivator by itself but it's also possible to match the beats per minute to the cadence and intensity of your workout. Pacedj.com can help you find tracks to keep you spinning.

3 Turbo training needn't be a lonely pursuit. Being surrounded by other peoples' suffering makes it less likely that you'll sit up. Ask if your local cycling club runs a winter turbo training session.

4 Keeping a record of the time that you've put in won't only help you track your progress it'll provide an incentive to carry on. Websites like Endomondo have features to log your static rides on.

Tacx Blue Matic £140

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'Excellent value magnetic trainer. Good-looking frame provides a sturdy pedalling base.'

WHAT WE SAY: Some assembly is required but the Universal fit option caters for bikes with wheel sizes from 600 to 710mm. The snap-on contact between tyre and flywheel and bolt-action skewer clamp are handy features to secure your bike simply while the Matic's wide, low base remains stable even when sprinting. The bar-mounted dial has 10 levels and provides a good spread of resistance.

Ride feel is adequate but when the unit is pushed to its 700-watt max, resistance gets clunky. This remains quiet whatever the effort, but chucks out a fair bit of vibration making a trainer mat a must.

fisheroutdoor.co.uk

Verdict

Manages to deliver both good looks and good performance for the price.



OVERALL
7
10

AT A GLANCE

BKOOL ONE £165	9
JETBLACK M5 PRO MAG £175	8
ELITE NOVO FORCE £150	8
MINOURA B60 R £150	8
CYCLEOPS TEMPO FLUID £160	7
TACX BLUE MATIC £140	7

BIKE LOCKS

You love your bike. But how best to protect it from villains and blackguards when you're not about? We unpick the truth with

 How do you keep your bike safe when you have to leave it on its own? Surely the best person to ask that question to is a bike thief, right? Meet Shenol Shaddouh.

Londoner Shenol, aged 22, used to be a bike thief but he's all right now. These days he works a cycle mechanic but he still knows what a crook will be on the look out for. 'You'd be surprised how many expensive bikes just have cable locks,' Shenol told us. 'I once stole a Time bike with Campagnolo Super Record locked up like that. I think people get worried about big locks damaging their frames, but a bike at that price with that sort of lock? Ridiculous.'

'I would give breaking a lock a maximum of five minutes for a really expensive bike, less for a cheap one. I mean, if you've

got all the time in the world and any tools you like, you can get through anything, but thieves tend to use portable tools – like bolt cutters – and if it takes too long you leave it, as there's probably something else around the corner that's easier to take.'

So with Shenol's insider wisdom ringing in our ears we set about testing which locks will put up the best fight. Weights are from the *BikesEtc* scales, 'Sold Secure' rating is as independently tested by the Master Locksmiths Association. Here's what we found out...

OVERALL
7
10

Knog Bouncer £39.99
WEIGHT: 0.84KG SOLD SECURE: BRONZE

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'Knog presents a compelling package that includes double locking mechanism, rubberised coating and a range of colours.'

WHAT WE SAY: For a lock called the Bouncer this is of rather diminutive stature. That does mean it's great for stashing in bags, or even a pocket, but the trade-off is it'll struggle to lock your bike to anything more than a dedicated bike rack or railing. On the plus side, the double locking mechanism means cutting needs to happen on both sides of the shackle.

todayscyclist.co.uk

Verdict
Bronze level won't sit well with insurers but low size and weight make for a decent café stop option.



BikesEtc

BEST IN TEST



OVERALL
9
10

Abus Super Ultimate £49.99

WEIGHT: 1.45KG SOLD SECURE: GOLD

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'A double-locking mechanism and a shackle that extends through the lock body to better protect against torsion/twisting attacks.'

WHAT WE SAY: Rubberised housing should prevent frame damage. Big enough to fit around frames and most signposts while small and just about light enough to be considered compact. The decent frame-mounting system doesn't rattle around.

zyro.co.uk

Verdict
A Sold Secure Gold rating at this price is top notch, and the frame-mounting bracket is great too.





LifeLine Performance High Security U-Lock £34

WEIGHT: 1.80KG SOLD SECURE: GOLD

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'Three keys, plastic coated, frame-mounting bracket, Sold Secure gold rating... all under £35'

WHAT WE SAY: Impressively well-specced lock for the price, with a double-locking mechanism to slow thieves.

OVERALL
9
10



Longest shackle on test, but for the length, the U-Lock could be wider. The finish is decent, although when mounted to the frame it has a tendency to rattle. But for the money it represents incredible value.

wiggle.co.uk

Verdict

A bit jangly but we'll excuse that because of the high Sold Secure rating. Long enough for two bikes.

A double-locking mechanism, securing both ends of the shackle, will slow down bike thieves

Hiplok Original £64.99

WEIGHT: 1.83KG SOLD SECURE: SILVER

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'The original wearable lock that fits around the waist with a Velcro clasp. Removable nylon sleeve covers an 8mm thick, 90cm long hardened steel chain.'

WHAT WE SAY: As the only truly 'wearable' lock here, this brings a whole new meaning to the word 'chaingang'. The nature of a chain means two cuts are necessary to break it open, however at 8mm the shackles are the thinnest on test. The outer sleeve protects frames well. Fits around awkwardly shaped and sized objects well.

hiplok.com

OVERALL
8
10

Verdict
Innovative easy-carry design takes the weight off your bike or backpack.



Kryptonite Messenger + U-lock Extender £49.99

WEIGHT: 1.13KG
SOLD SECURE: NOT YET RATED

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'Scores 7/10 on Kryptonite's security scale, backed by an anti-theft policy, which pays out up to £900 in the event of theft in the first year.'

WHAT WE SAY: We love the ingenious extra U-lock for wheels. The size makes it easily stashable, although internal dimensions are on the small side.

madison.co.uk

OVERALL
7
10

Verdict
A trendy lock. Compact and easy to use but the lack of heft left us feeling slightly nervous





Kryptonite, Evolution Series 4 £44.99

WEIGHT: 1.52KG SOLD SECURE: GOLD

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: '14 mm hardened Kryptonium steel shackle paired to a double deadbolt locking mechanism provides extensive holding power. Anti-Rattle bumpers keeps the shackle snug against the crossbar and prevent unnecessary noise'

WHAT WE SAY: Cheap for a lock with a SoldSecure gold rating from a big name like Kryptonite. Nothing sort of an angle grinder is likely to be getting through this in a hurry.

madison.co.uk

Verdict

The bracket isn't the sturdiest but the bike will probably stay exactly where you left it.

OVERALL
9
10



OnGuard Brute LS £54.99

WEIGHT: 1.84KG SOLD SECURE: GOLD

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'The LS (Long Shackle) has an internal length of 260mm. The double X4 locking mechanism makes the Brute "impervious to prying, jacking or cutting", while the rubberised coating protects paint. Comes with five keys.'

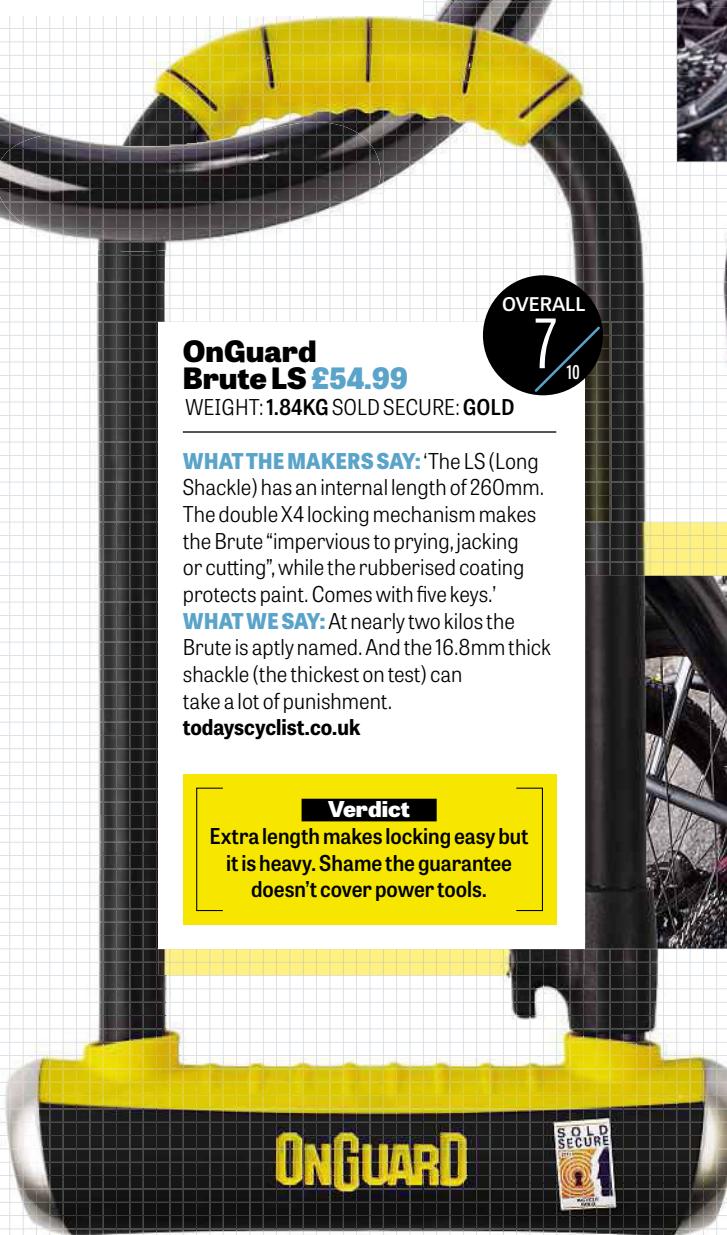
WHAT WE SAY: At nearly two kilos the Brute is aptly named. And the 16.8mm thick shackle (the thickest on test) can take a lot of punishment.

todayscyclist.co.uk

Verdict

Extra length makes locking easy but it is heavy. Shame the guarantee doesn't cover power tools.

OVERALL
7
10



BBB Power Fold, £49.95

WEIGHT: 0.93KG

SOLD SECURE: NOT YET RATED

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY: 'Foldable, hardened steel lock. Universal frame mounting using rubberised holster and Velcro straps, taking up little more space than a water bottle.'

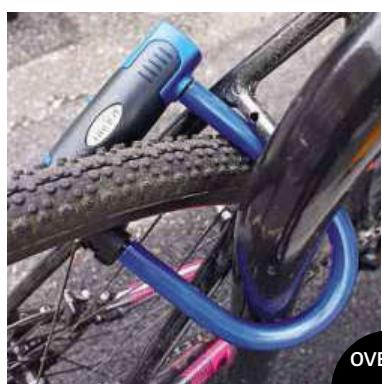
WHAT WE SAY: No Sold Secure rating can be a deal breaker with insurance companies, so it pays to check. The linked-bar construction isn't quite as versatile as it seems, but the mounting system is by far the neatest on test. It doesn't leave any mounting hardware behind on frames, and is easily transferrable between bikes.

windwave.co.uk

Verdict

No Sold Secure rating makes this an unknown quantity, but we like the compact design and neat holster.





OVERALL
8
10

Squire Eiger Compact, £44.99

WEIGHT: 1.38KG SOLD SECURE: GOLD

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY:

A 13mm hardened steel shackle affixes to a double locking mechanism, and is covered in an octagonal, rubberised coating to both protect frame and impede cutting tools.

WHAT WE SAY: Solid, no-nonsense lock from a trusted name in security. Includes a solid frame mount. Impressively light for a gold-level lock with such spacious internal dimensions. Not the most stylish, but if it protects your pride and joy, who cares? squirelocks.co.uk

Verdict

It's small but good width makes locking simpler than other compact locks. Top level security too.

Hiplok D £49.99

WEIGHT: 1.01KG SOLD SECURE: SILVER

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY:

'Easily carried on a belt, a bag strap, or in a pocket, it's always at hand for quick access and locking. Hiplok D brings together high strength, considered ergonomics and great functionality in a compact package.'

WHAT WE SAY: Light and small enough to stow in a pocket, but its narrow internal dimensions and short length mean you may struggle to find places to lock your bike or to get it around your wheels. On the plus side, it also means leverage type attacks are off the out of the question.

hiplok.com

Verdict

Locking is tricky but quality construction and easy portability make this a great minimalist choice.

The Hiplok D's small internal dimensions mean leverage attacks are out of the question

OVERALL
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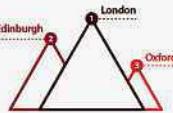


UK Cycle Crime

BikeRegister

Top 10 Most Targeted Cities

- 1 Bristol
- 2 Liverpool
- 3 Manchester
- 4 Cambridge
- 5 Cardiff
- 6 Bournemouth
- 7 Reading



UK Cycle Crime Hotspots

(UK locations with highest reported by year to date)

● 60-79 ● 78-90

● 80-99 ● 98+

● 100+ ● 201-300

● 301+ ● 501+



London Cycle Crime Hotspots

(London locations with highest reported by year to date)

● 100+ ● 101-200

● 201-300 ● 301+

The 10 Most Stolen Bikes

1 Specialized Status	
2 Specialized Allez	
3 Canyon Endurace	
4 Ridgeback Velocity	
5 Specialized Rockhopper	
6 Specialized MTB	
7 Specialized Rockhopper	
8 Specialized Langma	
9 Specialized Crux	
10 Specialized Venge	

Source: Data supplied by Bike Register - The National Cycle Database - www.bikerregister.com

HOW SAFE IS YOUR BIKE?

Find out where your town ranks in our league table of the UK's bike crime hotspots

Bike Register, the national cycle database, has produced a report for BikesEtc detailing the UK's worst spots for bike crime and the most popular bikes with thieves. Read the full report in detail at cyclist.co.uk/crime.

CONCLUSION

ABUS SUPER ULTIMATE
£49.99

9

LIFELINE PERFORMANCE HIGH SECURITY U-LOCK £34

9

KRYPTONITE EVOLUTION SERIES 4 £44.99

9

HIPLOK ORIGINAL
£64.99

8

ONGUARD BRUTE LS
£54.99

8

SQUIRE EIGER COMPACT £44.99

8

HIPLOK D
£49.99

7

KNOG BOUNCER
£39.99

7

KRYPTONITE MESSENGER + U-LOCK EXTENDER £49.99

7

BBB POWER FOLD
£49.95

6

BUDGET BIKE COMPUTERS

To monitor speed, time and distance, you don't need to splash out on a GPS

 Technology has, for some time, been determined to kill off the humble speedometer. While GPS computers may be the best way to compare your speed to others, if you simply crave a number on the handlebars to measure your own efforts, a wireless computer can be cheaper and less hassle. 'We still sell a great deal of non-GPS cycling computers, easily in the tens of thousands globally,' says Doug Brown, global sales director at Cateye, long-time masters of the cycling computer.

'Most retailers still want to stock an entry-level computer,' says Brown. 'Lots of riders just want to know what their distance or speed is and don't care about downloading heart rate or cadence.'

Wired computers remain the most affordable option, but routing a wire from the fork to the handlebar is lot of hassle for a small saving. Wireless computers usually start between £30 and £40. At this price you get a simple, neat computer that measures time, speed and distance, sometimes with other data such as averages or calories, but don't expect more complex figures such as cadence, nor will you able to download your data to a computer afterwards.



BikesEtc
BEST VALUE




Sigma BC 8.12 ATS £29.99

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY Despite being the entry level model, it's impressively well-equipped. With seven data fields, including average speed, the BC 8.12 offers more than you would expect at this price.

WHAT WE SAY The Sigma BC 8.12 is extremely easy to set up, and easily mountable with the elastic bands provided. Both the computer and the sensor are tastefully slender; although the white colour scheme does make the computer look a little like some form of medical equipment. Just ignore the confusing installation guide;

it's intuitive to set up, with switches between data fields done via the central button. It proved slightly tricky to get the sensor to register speed at first, but once up and running it was accurate and responsive.

todayscyclist.co.uk

Verdict

More functions at a lower price than most of its rivals, slightly let down by a temperamental sensor.

OVERALL
9
10**Bontrager Trip 100****£34.99****WHAT THE MAKERS SAY** With a focus on simplicity, the Trip 100 is geared at doing the basics very well.**WHAT WE SAY** The manual on how to set the Trip 100 computer up is so complicated and extensive that it includes a manual on how to use the manual. It took over 20 minutes to get the unit ready to go. Once through that initial hassle, however, it becomes a pleasure to use. The sensor and magnet are easily attached, and the head unit has an extremely pragmatic elastic strap, making removal and switching between bikes very straightforward. The magnet is the slickest we've seen, snapping shut over the spoke. It's easy to use, has a tactile feel to the buttons and a clear display.trekbikes.com**Verdict**

Once past the complex set-up, this is an attractive, effective and easily installed computer.

VDO M2.1 WL £35**WHAT THE MAKERS SAY** With a modern feel, a large display and wide functionality, the M2.1 is one of the few computers to offer calorie count amid another 10 functions.**WHAT WE SAY** The slickest-looking unit on test. It verges on something that you might expect to find at the Apple Store. We were slightly discouraged by the mounting system, which requires zip ties to secure the sticky-back mount to the handlebars, making it tricky to swap between bikes. On the road, however, the unit is excellent. The sensor picks up the spoke magnet with ease and offers very responsive changes in speed. It's hard to know how accurate the calorie counter is on a computer without heart rate or altitude measurement, but it's a welcome addition all the same.paligap.cc**Verdict**
A neatly finished package with a few slight fitment niggles. Great display and usability.OVERALL
9
10OVERALL
8
10**Knog Nerd 5 £38.99****WHAT THE MAKERS SAY** It has five functions, it's wireless and it needs no fiddling whatsoever in terms of fitment. Knog describes it as 'the smartest thing on two wheels, but golly is she a foxy one'.**WHAT WE SAY** While some may find this Knog a vision of tidy design, others may consider it to be rather bulky and industrial. Five functions isn't very many at this price – there's no average or max speed measurements – but it makes up for it in ease of installation. Loop the silicone strap around the handlebar, clip the sensor to the fork, and you're ready to go. It took less than a minute from being boxed to being completely set up. There are no buttons – you just press on the screen – and the speed data is receptive and reliable.todayscyclist.co.uk**Verdict**
Wonderfully easy to set up and switch between bikes, but could do with a few more functions.

Ciclosport CM 4.21

£34.99

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY With three tiers of information, you get a lot of data on screen at the same time.

WHAT WE SAY The CM 4.21's clunky name is matched by its somewhat industrial looks. The head unit is by far the largest on test, which means there's lots of space for data on the screen, but it won't do anything for the aesthetics of your bike. Set-up isn't too complicated, although it's tricky to get the sensor in the right place to start registering speed. The spoke magnet is somewhat puzzling. Being nearly 2cm deep and fastened by a screw, requiring a Philips-head screwdriver, it looks like it may have been taken from a bulkier appliance. A washing machine, perhaps.

hotlines-uk.com



Verdict
Not the most aesthetically appealing but, once set up, it does the job well enough.



OVERALL
6
10



OVERALL
10
10

Cateye Velo wireless

£34.99

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY Cateye produced its first bike computer in 1981 and is now among the biggest names in non-GPS units. This is the most basic wireless model, but offers everything you could want, with speed, time and distance metrics as well as average speed.

WHAT WE SAY Straight out of the box the Velo is intuitive and effective. Within seconds the computer was ready to go, and the data generated by the unit offers everything we would consider useful. The Velo uses a simple and slick-looking magnet that fits easily on rounded or bladed spokes, and a small radar signal pops up on screen to show when the magnet is being read by the sensor. It's hard to find any fault at all.

zyro.co.uk

Verdict
It's clear that Cateye has been making cycling computers for a long time. This is simple perfection.



**BBB Microboard
BCP-31W £39.95**

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY Everything about this computer is small and light, but it still manages to squeeze in eight functions.

WHAT WE SAY It certainly feels lighter than the alternatives, and the small sensor unit adds a lot to the appearance. We also appreciated the metallic set-up button, which offers a good, decisive click (these things matter). The understated nature of the sensor does have one disadvantage, which is that the magnet doesn't seem to pick up on the sensor very easily, so a bit of fiddling is required to get the sensor and magnet as close as possible, but otherwise the Microboard performed flawlessly.

windwave.co.uk

Verdict

The choice for anyone looking for the smallest, lightest, neatest unit possible

**Blackburn Atom SL 4.0
£34.99**

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY The Atom SL 4.0 measures what Blackburn calls 'the hard metrics' of time, distance and speed. A selling point is its ability to measure speed at the rear wheel rather than the front, making it a viable option for turbo training.

WHAT WE SAY Blackburn has done a good job of keeping things simple, and this unit is nearly foolproof. The computer can be mounted with either zip ties or a Velcro strap to the stem or handlebar. We were tentative of the Velcro strap at first but it stayed firm on bumpy rides. Set-up and use are both easy, and it performed simple functions admirably. While there are few faults, it's just not as sleek or clever as some of the other options on test.

zyro.co.uk

**Verdict**

No frills and slightly industrial, but effective. The rear mounting is a benefit for turbo users.



£2,000 Ultegra bikes

When you're spending this kind of money, you don't want to compromise, but does Shimano's Ultegra groupset live up to the promise of near Dura-Ace performance at a more accessible price? *BikesEtc* finds out...

WORDS MARC ABBOTT

Shimano's Ultegra groupset might be best described as 'the people's Dura-Ace'. Now lavished upon much more affordable bikes, whether as a complete family or as a number of well-chosen components to create a bike built for a specific point, it's the second-rung mechanical groupset in the firm's range. It's also the first to benefit from trickle-down developments in Shimano's top-end Dura-Ace components favoured by racers and well-heeled, weight-obsessed spec junkies.

The four bikes we've assembled for this test all sport Ultegra kit in varying amounts. The £1,900 Vitesse Evo from Vitus, for example, is a race bike festooned with Ultegra, save for the Shimano 105-series cassette. Norco's Valence SL all-rounder combines an Ultegra chainset and shifters with a 105 cassette and Tektro brakes, making it the most affordable at a tempting £1,600. Merida's Reacto 5000, meanwhile, is an aero road bike for the masses, employing wind-tunnel-developed tubing in a race-ready

package. At £2,000, it's the most expensive, and uses Ultegra shifters allied to an FSA Gossamer chainset, a 105 cassette and direct-mount brakes.

Finally, Bianchi's new-for-2016 Intrepida is a £1,700 endurance bike, designed for big days in the saddle. Its Ultegra shifters are married to a Shimano non-series chainset, Bianchi's own-brand Reparto Corse brakes and a 105 cassette.

So, does your bike really work best when all its components come from the same family? Our exhaustive testing provides the answer...

BIKES ON TEST

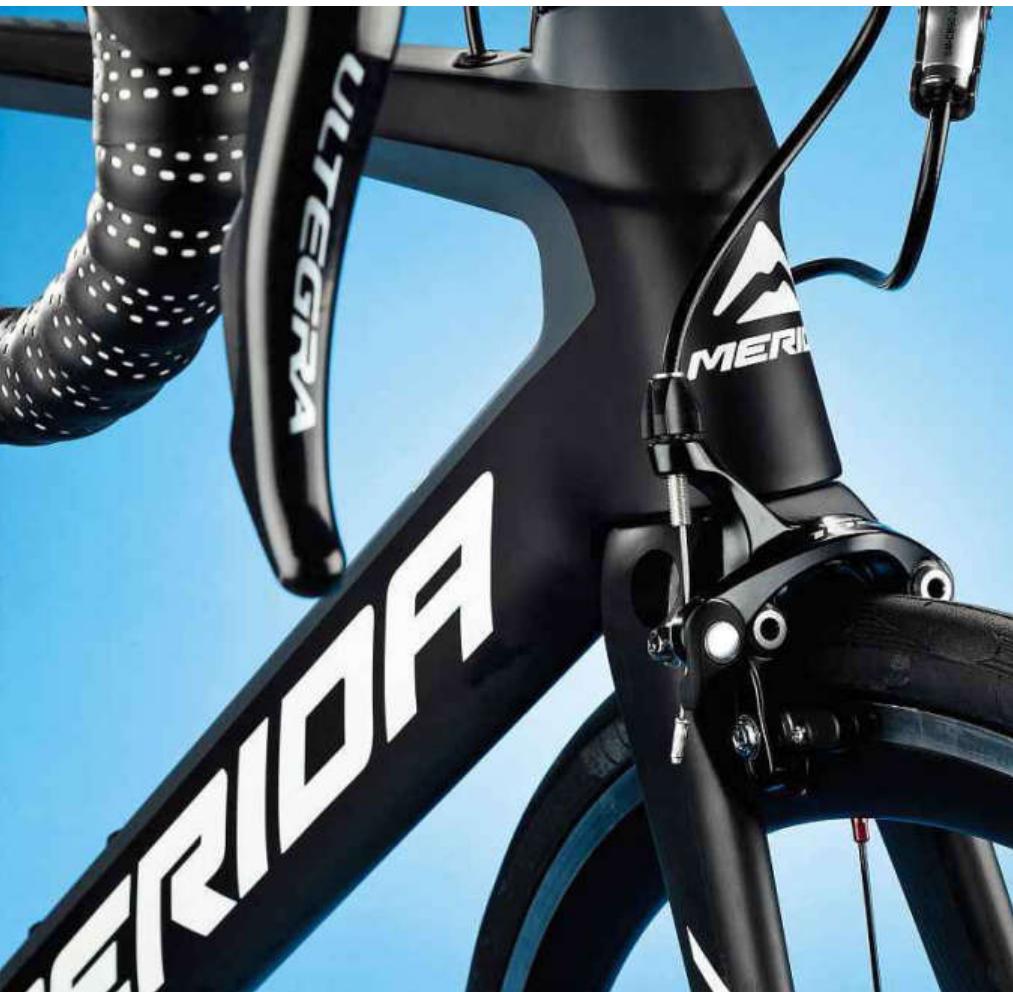


BIANCHI INTREPIDA
£1,700

MERIDA REACTO 5000
£2,000

NORCO VALENCE SL
£1,600

VITUS VITESSE EVO
£1,900



HOW WE TEST

When it comes to testing bikes, we don't take anything the manufacturers tell us as gospel: the first thing we do when a new bike arrives is to take its measurements and compare our findings with the stated geometry. We also compare the spec with what's been advertised. If anything has changed, we'll get to the bottom of it.

With the seat and bars moved into roughly the correct positions, we head out to ride a few laps of our local park loop to fine-tune the set-up before the first big test ride. Bigger rides consist of short, sharp climbs, longer seated efforts, descents and a variety of road surfaces.

Every aspect of the bikes' handling and performance is assessed and scored according to our detailed criteria, and then the bikes are passed around the team for an all-important second opinion. Finally those opinions, scores and measurements are collated into the comprehensive reviews you're about to read.

THE OVERALL RATING FOR EACH BIKE IS BASED ON THESE ELEMENTS...

FRAME

Our in-house testing questionnaire rates frames out of 30, based on geometry, on-road feel, stiffness, compliance, finish and intended use.

COMPONENTS

We rate components out of 20, based on groupset and finishing kit – great bars and stems will be marked down if they're the wrong size for the frame.

WHEELS

We rate the wheel and tyres package out of 20, weighting it towards the wheels: tyres come and go, but wheels are a more expensive element to replace.

THE RIDE

Rated out of 30, we take into account ride quality and also value – does the bike do what we expect of a bike at this price? The best in test exceed expectations.



Bianchi Intrepida £1,700

Sensitively equipped Italian for long-haul rides



About the bike

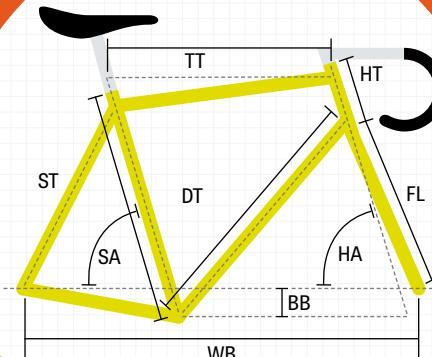
New for 2016, Bianchi's Intrepida is an entry-level carbon road bike that slots into the firm's Endurance Racing range – above the alloy-framed Impulso and below the better-specced Intenso carbon bikes. Featuring geometry designed with longer rides in mind, and a good dose of Ultegra parts to catch the eye and keep its price keen, this bike is a compelling proposition. But can the new kid on the block challenge Norco's very similar Valence SL for long-distance comfort and levels of excitement?



GEOMETRY

	Claimed	Measured	Head tube (HT)	155mm	154mm
Top tube (TT)	535mm	535mm	Head angle (HA)	71°	70.3°
Seat tube (ST)	480mm	483mm	Seat angle (SA)	73.5°	73°
Down tube (DT)	N/A	610mm	Wheelbase (WB)	N/A	987mm
Fork length (FL)	N/A	372mm	BB drop (BB)	N/A	70mm

Size tested 51
Weight 8.28kg





SPEC

FRAME

Intrepida carbon frame and fork, 1.5in steerer

GROUPSET

Shimano Ultegra

BRAKES

Reparto Corse RC-471

CHAINSET

Shimano FC-RS500-L, 50/34

CASSETTE

Shimano 105, 11-28

STEM

Reparto Corse compact, 6061 alloy

SADDLE

Selle San Marco Era Start

SEATPOST

Reparto Corse compact, 6061 alloy, 31.6mm

WHEELS

Shimano RS010-CL

TYRES

Vittoria Zaffiro Pro, 25c

CONTACT

bianchi.com

The Ride

Riding position: The Intrepida's easy-going frame geometry makes getting a comfortable position for a long ride pretty simple. And once you're on the move, corners are taken with confidence if not with a marked difference in steering speed compared to a bike like the Vitus Vitesse Evo. A raked out 70.3° head angle does have a noticeable impact in very fast, downhill corners, which is compounded further by the high-riding position thanks to the tall

head tube. However, with all but the bottom 10mm spacer moved to the top of the stem, we were able to get low enough to wrestle the Intrepida through some tighter turns with a smile on our face.

On the road: The overriding sensation is one of surprising stiffness, which borders on harsh once the road surface deteriorates. But it's stiffness in a good way – the RS500 chainset is strong (if heavy), and works nicely in conjunction with a traditional

threaded bottom bracket and those chunky chainstays to provide a feeling of direct connection with the road. However, the bars are a little on the stiff side, meaning juddering gives your bingo wings a workout on pitted tarmac. The stocky-looking seatpost also suffers for its thickness, affording less flex than the Norco's narrower unit. This all adds up to a bike that isn't afraid to climb, and allows you to put everything you have into ➤



Chunky chainstays add stiffness while slender seatstays bring a little comfort-giving flex

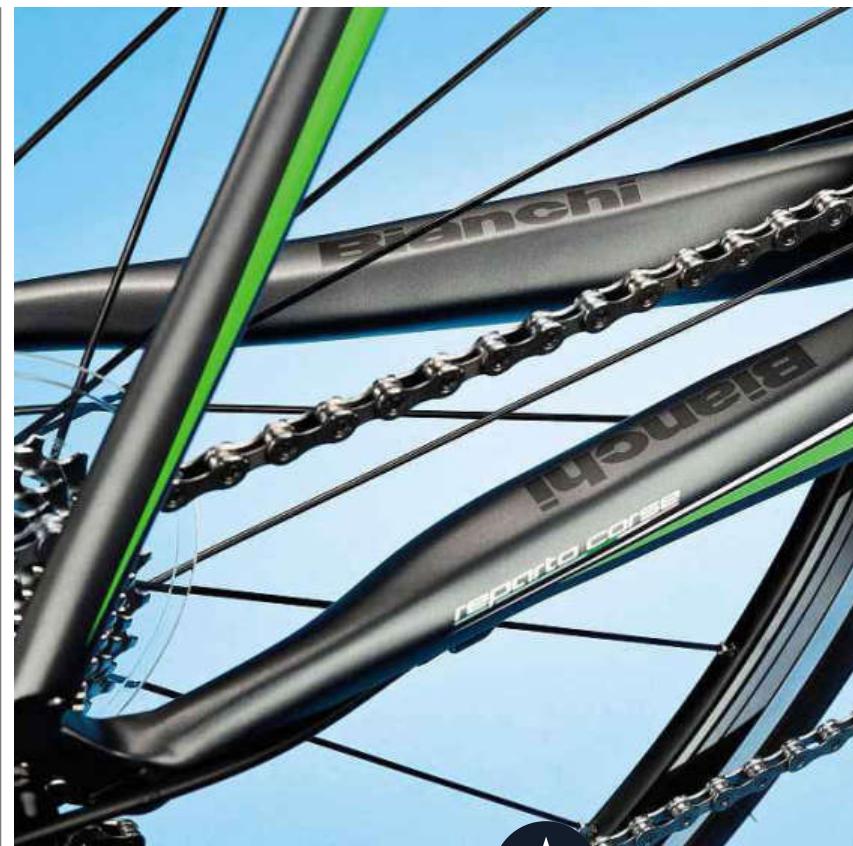
ascending. You are, of course, fighting against the Bianchi's less-than-svelte 8.28kg weight, which is fairly substantial for our size 51 test bike. Gear ratios are spot-on for the type of terrain this bike is likely to see, however. Yes, an 11-32 might be better, but the downside of that would be bigger jumps between ratios. The Reparto Corse-branded brakes are solid performers, but they are not as easily modulated as the Merida's direct-mount units, nor quite as precise as the Vitus's Ultegra callipers.

Handling: The inescapable fact with this otherwise solid entry-level endurance bike is that its rotational mass – the wheels and tyres – is greater than any of the other bikes on test. The RS010 wheels weighed in at 2,496g without tyres and quick-release skewers, making them a good half a kilo heavier than the Norco's Eastons. This helps explain their slowness to spin up when you either fancy a friendly sprint with mates or are faced with a short, steep climb like Winnats Pass. A lighter wheelset – like the Vitus's Mavic Ksyriums – would greatly improve the quality of the ride.

The spec

Frameset: Bianchi's carbon monocoque frame employs classic endurance bike geometry. The tapered head tube measured at 154mm is a whopping 21mm longer than the Norco's – the closest comparison among these bikes for intended use. With a further 35mm of spacers available on the steerer, anyone can get a relaxed riding position out of the Intrepida. An oversized hexagonal-profile down tube meets a beefed-up bottom bracket before extending into some seriously braced chainstays. The intention here is to give a solid platform from which to get the power down. Narrow seatstays flow into the seat tube, joining the frame in a carbon fibre bridge intended to provide an element of damping. Interestingly, the seatpost itself is 31.6mm in diameter – 27.2mm is more typical and universally accepted as more flexible, therefore giving an easier ride.

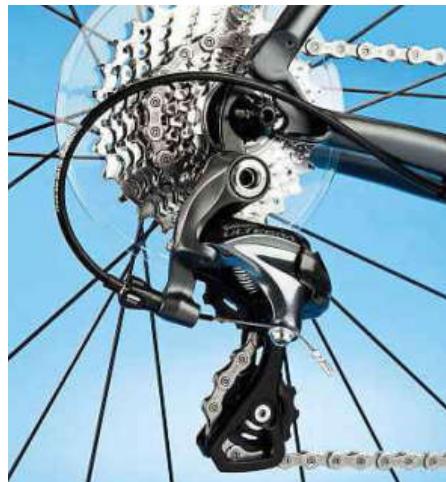
Groupset: While the headline feature of the Intrepida's groupset is undoubtedly its Ultegra shifters, the only other component from Shimano's second-tier groupset is the rear derailleur. A Shimano 105 chain, front mech and 11-28 cassette combine with a non-series Shimano five-arm RS500 alloy chainset to form the drivetrain. Its 50/34



compact set-up is sportive-friendly, and matched to the wide spread of ratios on the 11-speed cassette should help tired riders propel themselves up any incline.

Finishing kit: The brakes are badged as Reparto Corse ('race department'). Their fuss-free single-pivot operation makes them very easy to set up and adjust. Reparto Corse finishing kit is also used for the compact-drop alloy handlebars and stem, while a well-padded Selle San Marco Era Start saddle sits atop the alloy seatpost.

Wheels: The Bianchi rolls on Shimano's own RS010 alloy clinchers – not a performance wheelset, but reliable enough for covering big miles in relative comfort. Although these aren't a patch on the Mavics of the Vitus (or the Easton EA70s of the Norco) their steel axles should be close to bombproof. Finally, Vittoria's Zaffiro Pro Slick 25c tyres confidently takes care of the road-holding duties. ⚡



A Shimano 105 cassette and Ultegra rear derailleur (above) produce smooth shifting, while an inline barrel adjuster (right) helps keep things tuned to perfection



RATING

FRAME

Designed for power and comfort – and it shows

COMPONENTS

A good mix of Ultegra, 105 and own-brand parts

WHEELS

Not performance-oriented but strong and reliable

THE RIDE

Stiffness is great for power transfer, but not comfort

OVERALL

7.4
10

A stiff frame with comfort-oriented geometry adds up to a solid all-day endurance set-up

"I NEED A
BARRIER
THAT STOPS
EVERY
THING
BUT
ME."



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Merida Reacto 5000

£2,000

An aero weapon with all the right ammunition



About the bike

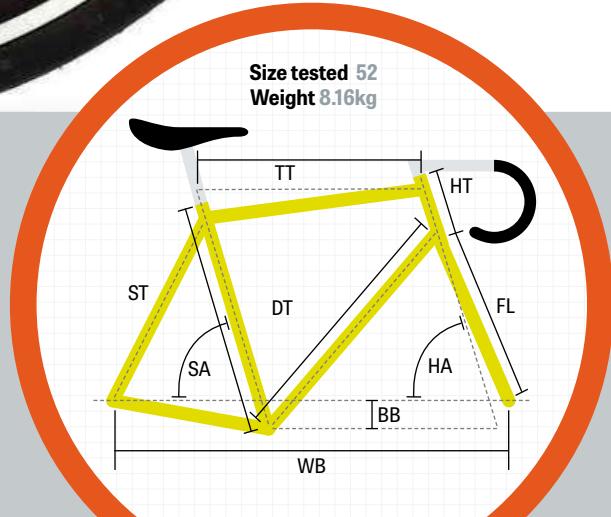
Copying the geometry of the bike used by the likes of Rui Costa on the Lampre-Merida World Tour team, the Merida Reacto 5000 is an aero road bike with racing credentials. Frame tubes developed in the wind tunnel by the Taiwanese manufacturer combine with aero details to make a bike designed for maximum speed, efficiency and comfort. What more do you want? The question is, can it live up to the promise of being an 'everyman's aero bike'? And do its Ultegra components gel with the rest of its kit to form a cohesive whole?



GEOMETRY

	Claimed	Measured	Head tube (HT)	139mm	136mm
Top tube (TT)	545mm	545mm	Head angle (HA)	73°	72.3°
Seat tube (ST)	520mm	522mm	Seat angle (SA)	72-75°	73.6°
Down tube (DT)	N/A	614mm	Wheelbase (WB)	984mm	980mm
Fork length (FL)	N/A	372mm	BB drop (BB)	61mm	66mm

Size tested 52
Weight 8.16kg





SPEC

FRAME
Reacto carbon frame and pro-direct fork

GROUPSET
Shimano Ultegra

BRAKES
Shimano 105 direct-mount

CHAINSET
FSA Gossamer Pro, 52/36

CASSETTE
Shimano 105, 11-28

BARS
FSA Gossamer compact, alloy

STEM
Merida Pro, alloy

SADDLE
Prologo Kappa 2

SEATPOST
Reacto Aero Carbon Race

WHEELS
Fulcrum Racing Quattro

TYRES
Continental Grand Sport Race, 700 x 25

CONTACT
merida-bikes.com

The ride

Riding position: For all the Reacto 5000's aero tube profiles, the over-riding – and somewhat surprising – first impression is of a bike that's really quite comfortable. The flared seatstays and chainstays, combined with Merida's flexible seatpost, do a good job of isolating vibrations from rough roads. Plus, the Prologo saddle, while not the most comfortable of the four bikes we've tested here, is by far the most sumptuously padded.

On the road: The bike seems to have pulled off the trick of providing decent comfort at the same time as impressive stiffness, the latter of which is evident when you rise from the perch and give everything you've got for a road sign sprint. The Fulcrum Quattro wheels are a sound choice, but we get the feeling their high radial stiffness makes the ride more severe than it could be on choppier roads. Plus, their 1,720g weight means they don't accelerate with race

wheel-rapidity, either. That said, in crosswinds, where you might expect slab-sided aero frame tubes and relatively deep rims to suffer, the Reacto effortlessly rises to the challenge.

It's not a bad climber, either, especially when tackling a local ascent in the saddle. The mid-compact chainset doesn't have the vast range of climbing gears offered by the Norco Valence SL, but it's adequate for most short climbs. Key here →



£2,000 Ultegra bikes

Direct-mount 105 callipers under the bottom bracket give the Reacto 5000 an aero advantage

is the solid connection between the wide bottom bracket and chunky stays, combined with the pleasantly cossetting rider's rear contact point. It lacks the ease of shifting under load that both the Vitus and Norco offer. Possibly the FSA chainset isn't quite as keenly matched to the shifters as Ultegra chainrings and cranks might be, but the cranks are certainly stiff enough once the gear is engaged.

Handling: When the ride becomes more spirited, especially in downhill corners, the Reacto responds to small steering changes in a way that exposes its racing DNA. It's by no means twitchy, but is highly responsive when ridden in anger. We'd stop short of saying 'exhilarating', but with all the available spacers above the stem and full commitment on the drops, there are bags of thrills to be had.

However, there are a few grumbles. The integrated seat clamp (with its associated expansion wedge butted against the seatpost) is fiddly to adjust, even if it's aerodynamically efficient. And the direct-mount rear brake, located behind the bottom bracket fails to bite with any proper strength, though it does offer an aero advantage.

The spec

Frameset: The list of proprietary frame tech on Merida's website could take the space of this whole test to properly explain. The headline features, however, are NACA Fastback tube profiles for aerodynamic efficiency; an S-Flex seatpost, with a rubberised section to dampen road vibrations; Bio-Fiber Damping, which uses flax fibres woven into the carbon frame to assist with vibe isolation, and a flip-flop head allowing adjustment of the seat angle over a 3° range.

The frame's geometry enforces its race-readiness, with a 73° head angle (which we measured at a moderately slower-steering 72.3°), short wheelbase and 136mm head tube allowing you to get low over the front, especially once the stem is slammed.

Internal gear cables are neatly routed through the top tube by a top cap-mounted cable guide. Both rear and front mech cables have barrel adjusters, and the rear brake cable has an inline quick release for the direct-mount calliper.

Groupset: The Merida uses Ultegra for the shifters and mechs, then a mixture of lower-line Shimano components and FSA kit. An 11-28 105 cassette is matched to an FSA



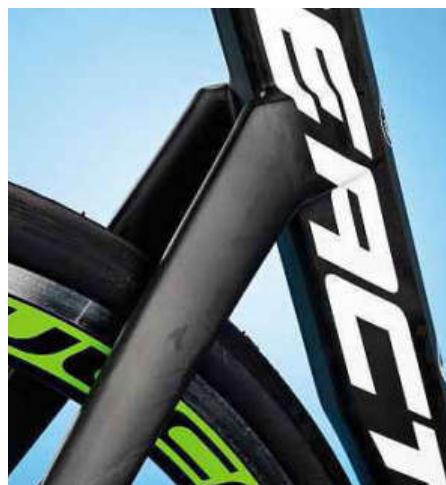
Gossamer Pro mid-compact, 52/36 chainset which gives away 57g to an equivalent Shimano Ultegra unit.

Finishing kit: Braking is taken care of by direct-mount 105 callipers. Popular on aero bikes, and even making their way on to more climbing-specific road bikes like Trek's higher-end Émondas, direct-mount callipers are fitted into the fork and are therefore closer to the frame.

This more rigid set-up offers more progressive braking force, a small aero advantage, and room for wider tyres.

FSA Gossamer compact alloy handlebars are gripped by a 100mm Merida-branded ControlTech stem, while at the rearward contact point, Merida's aero carbon flex seatpost is topped with a deeply padded Prologo Kappa 2 saddle.

Wheels: Fulcrum's 35mm deep-section Racing Quattro wheels are found at either end and, like the Norco's Easton EA70s, wear Continental 25c Grand Sport tyres.



Profiled aero tubes (above and right) show that this bike is built for speed, but the Merida also delivers an impressively smooth ride



RATING

FRAME

Stiff, light and surprisingly comfy. What's not to like?

COMPONENTS

Ultegra, 105 and FSA kit mostly works well together

WHEELS

35mm deep-section racing hoops do the job well

THE RIDE

Sporty, responsive and goes like a rocket

OVERALL

7.8
10

Asurprisingly comfortable race-focused aero bike that offers bags of thrills!



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STARLEY PRIMAL

Lightweight all season tubeless clincher...



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DEVAURA

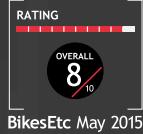
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24mm width



31mm height



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Photo: Nick Webster

Norco Valence SL £1,600

Endurance ride has top-line kit where it counts



About the bike

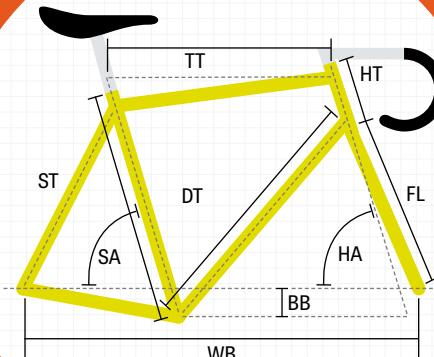
Exclusively distributed in the UK by Evans Cycles, the Canadian Norco Valence SL is aimed squarely at the endurance market, with frame geometry and design created for those of us who prefer a longer ride at perhaps a steadier pace, with damping and efficiency at the heart of its design. Alongside the Vitus, it's the only other bike here to use an Ultegra chainset to match its shifters. What else is there to get excited about? 'Laterally stiff yet vertically compliant,' says the marketing blurb. OK, we'll see about that!



GEOMETRY

	Claimed	Measured		
Top tube (TT)	525mm	525mm	Head tube (HT)	135mm 133mm
Seat tube (ST)	450mm	455mm	Head angle (HA)	71.75° 71°
Down tube (DT)	N/A	615mm	Seat angle (SA)	74° 73.8°
Fork length (FL)	375mm	376mm	Wheelbase (WB)	987mm 982mm
			BB drop (BB)	72.5mm 70mm

Size tested 50.5
Weight 7.42kg





SPEC

FRAME
Valence SL high-modulus carbon frame and fork, BB86 bottom bracket

GROUPSET
Shimano Ultegra

BRAKES
Tektro Quartz R741

CHAINSET
Shimano Ultegra, 50/34

CASSETTE
Shimano 105, 11-32

BARS
Norco compact lite, alloy

STEM
Norco Lite, alloy

SADDLE
Fizik Antares

SEATPOST
Norco Lite carbon, 27.2mm

WHEELS
Easton EA70

TYRES
Continental Grand Sport Race, 700 x 25

CONTACT
evanscycles.com

The ride

Riding position: From the moment we first stood out of the saddle and powered up a climb, the Valence's frame make-up became an obvious boon. The sloping tubes give the impression of a bike that you can really heave around beneath you, with the feeling of a low centre of gravity despite its fairly standard bottom bracket drop of 70mm. The bike's all-up weight of 7.42kg (the lightest on test by 300g) obviously helps here, too. The stiff bars and rear

end give a solid feel to the bike as you power skyward. But riding uphill – which you're obviously going to encounter during any good sportive, and what this bike is designed for – is only half the story. **On the road:** If covering big distances is your thing, the Norco is a banker. Cornering isn't a frantic affair, thanks to the long wheebase of the SL, but this gives a more relaxed ride for longer. The design of the rear stays really helps with all-day comfort,

and the great length of exposed carbon seatpost helps keep road vibes at bay. We're also big fans of Fizik's Aliante perch, which comes as part of the Valence's standard build. For long days in the saddle, it offers just the right amount of padding where it matters. Continental's 25c tyres are a huge bonus, and serve to improve riding comfort and cornering confidence further. The only thing getting in the way of comfort on pitted roads are ➤



£2,000 Ultegra bikes

When combined with the 50/34 chainset, the 11-32 cassette provides the widest gear range of all the bikes on test

the own-brand alloy handlebars. Notwithstanding the cheap-feeling, almost padding-free bar tape they're wrapped with, they're way too stiff to offer the kind of comfort you need on this country's back roads. Yes, that's a bonus for on-the-drops sprints and climbs, but if you plan to spend more than a few hours in the saddle, you should swap them out for something with a little more built-in flex – such as Zipp's sub-£50 alloy Service Course SL bars, if opting for high-end carbon is out of your budget.

Handling: If this all gives the impression of a spongy ride, that's not the case. The Norco acquires itself admirably over rolling terrain when you're really putting the hammer down. There's also enough precision from the low front end, which employs a tapered steerer, to entertain and still make fast cornering something you can be confident of.

Gear shifts are performed with predictable crispness across the cassette, although our preference would be for a closer-ratio block on the rear; for really smooth shifting with less of a jump between gears. An 11-28 or 12-25 11-speed option is available for 105 cassettes, and both offer smaller gaps between ratios at the bigger end of the block.

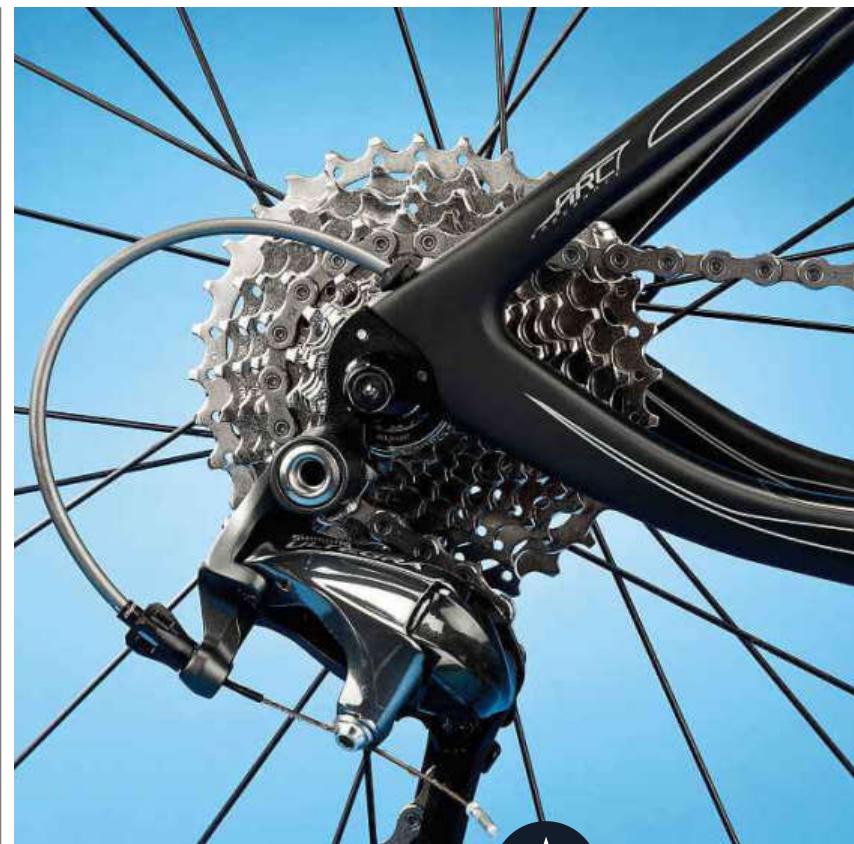
In short, the Valence has distance riding just about nailed, with a smooth ride quality allied to punchy response and light weight. A few component swaps, notably the bars, would turn this good bike into a truly excellent one.

The spec

Frameset: The defining features of the Norco Valence SL's frame design are extreme slopes and fluid stay shapes. The sharply angled top tube provides substantial standover height and, meeting a super-short 133mm head tube, helps minimise losses through flex.

A very short seat tube gives the 27.2mm carbon seatpost take a more of a vibration-damping role, too. The Valence's conservative 71° head angle marks this out as a bike designed for ache-free performance over distance – a fact further backed up by the bike's 982mm wheelbase. Easy handling and all-day comfort are the name of the Valence's game.

Groupset: Ultegra rocks up on the 50/34 chainset, shifters, and front and rear derailleurs. A 105 chain and 11-32 cassette complete the drivetrain, while Tektro brakes and 170mm cranks make great options too. The 11-32 cassette



offers the widest range of gears of all four of these bikes, and when combined with the 50/34 chainset, provides the most comfortable route up a climb.

Finishing kit: Norco's own alloy finishing kit is used for the stem and handlebars, the latter of which, as mentioned, is decidedly free of flex in the drops. The skinny carbon seatpost should help to isolate any road vibrations.

Wheels: A very welcome addition to the set-up is a set of Easton EA70 alloy clinchers. Far from bargain basement, they're very decent training wheels, and carry the advantage of a 22mm external, 17.5mm internal diameter, which gives the 25c Continental Grand Sport Race tyres a slightly wider contact patch with the road and allows lower pressure to be used for maximum riding comfort. The Conti rubber is budget-spec, but proven to be puncture resistant and grippy – even in slimy autumnal testing conditions. ⚡



The SL high-modulus carbon frame has extreme slopes and fluid stay shapes (above), while a 71° head tube angle (right) promises comfort over long distance



RATING

FRAME

Tube slopes and fluid stay shapes max out comfort

COMPONENTS

Ultegra dominates with a smart selection of other kit

WHEELS

Decent Easton wheels are a real plus at this price

THE RIDE

Need long-ride comfort in spades? You've got it!

OVERALL

7.9
10

Light and comfy with crisp shifting. If big distances are your thing, the Norco is a banker

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Vitus Vitesse Evo £1,900

Carbon all-rounder is almost entirely Ultegra-equipped



About the bike

The Vitesse Evo uses the same frame as the Evo Team model used by Irish pro outfit An-Post Chain Reaction. You may have seen it in action at September's World Road Race Championship in Richmond, Virginia, where man-mountain Conor Dunne spent considerable time in the break.

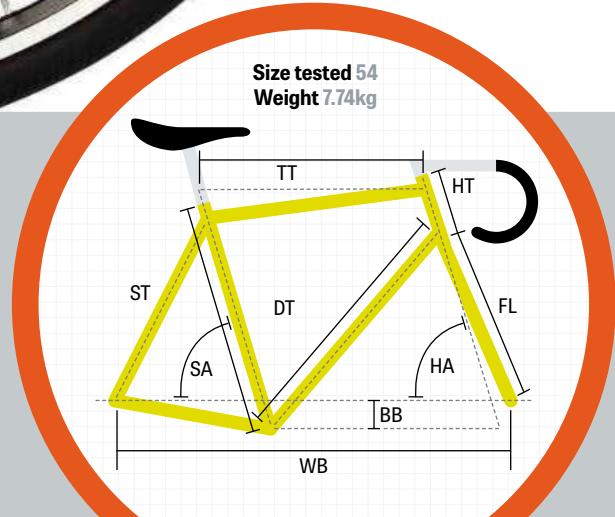
UCI-approved, and with geometry that screams 'hard and fast', the frame is real top-end stuff. But rather than the 'Team' version's mixture of Dura-Ace and FSA components, this Vitesse Evo runs Ultegra almost exclusively throughout the build.



GEOMETRY

	Claimed	Measured	Head tube (HT)	140mm	140mm
Top tube (TT)	545mm	545mm	Head angle (HA)	73°	73.5°
Seat tube (ST)	500mm	502mm	Seat angle (SA)	73.5°	73.1°
Down tube (DT)	N/A	615mm	Wheelbase (WB)	974.6mm	975mm
Fork length (FL)	N/A	374mm	BB drop (BB)	69mm	71mm

Size tested 54
Weight 7.74kg





SPEC

FRAME
T700 high-modulus, uni-directional carbon frame and fork, PF30 bottom bracket

GROUPSET
Shimano Ultegra

BRAKES
Shimano Ultegra

CHAINSET
Shimano Ultegra, 50/34

CASSETTE
Shimano 105, 11-25

BARS
Vitus compact, 6061 alloy

STEM
Vitus 6061 alloy

SADDLE
Prologo Scratch Pro II

SEATPOST
Vitus 6061 alloy

WHEELS
Mavic Ksyrium 25

TYRES
Mavic Yksion Elite, 25c

CONTACT
chainreactioncycles.com

The ride

Riding position: First things first – this feels more like a pukka race bike than any of the other three bikes we tested. This is a good thing in many ways, but if a 100-mile Sunday group ride is your bread and butter, the level of comfort on offer from the Vitesse Evo might not be adequate. However, the 25c tyres are a definite plus in the comfort stakes. The relatively short (140mm) head tube is as solid as anything we've tested, jarring occasionally on

what we'll call 'your average UK B-road', when combined with a stiff frameset for maximum pedalling efficiency whether on the flat or climbing.

On the road: With a biggest gear of 50x11, we never felt it was lacking anything when hammering flat roads or downhill stretches of our 80km test route, and although the lowest ratio of 34-25 wasn't needed on the punchier local climbs, it will do you for proper mountain territory.

The overall stiffness proves to offer exceptional handling prowess, especially in rapid downhill corners. The 73° head angle gives a responsive ride without any twitchiness when changing direction quickly. After only an hour on the bike, we were throwing it into corners with abandon, confident not only in holding a line but also in the grip from the Mavic tyres. Push them in the wet, however, and you'll be praying for Continental GP4000s. ➤



Ultegra shifters with matching front and rear mechs make for smooth gear shifting

In fact, the wheels and tyres are pretty much the limiting factor of this bike – it would be capable of much more with a lighter wheelset and grippier rubber. That said, even in this guise it's enough to put a maniacal grin on the face.

Handling: Point it at a typical short UK climb and this bike really punches upwards. Booting it uphill on the drops isn't the most efficient way to climb, owing to the flex in the bars, but on the hoods the Vitesse makes mincemeat of short, sharp ascents. At 7.74kg, it's no featherweight, but the rigidity gives it a responsiveness that's an easy trade-off.

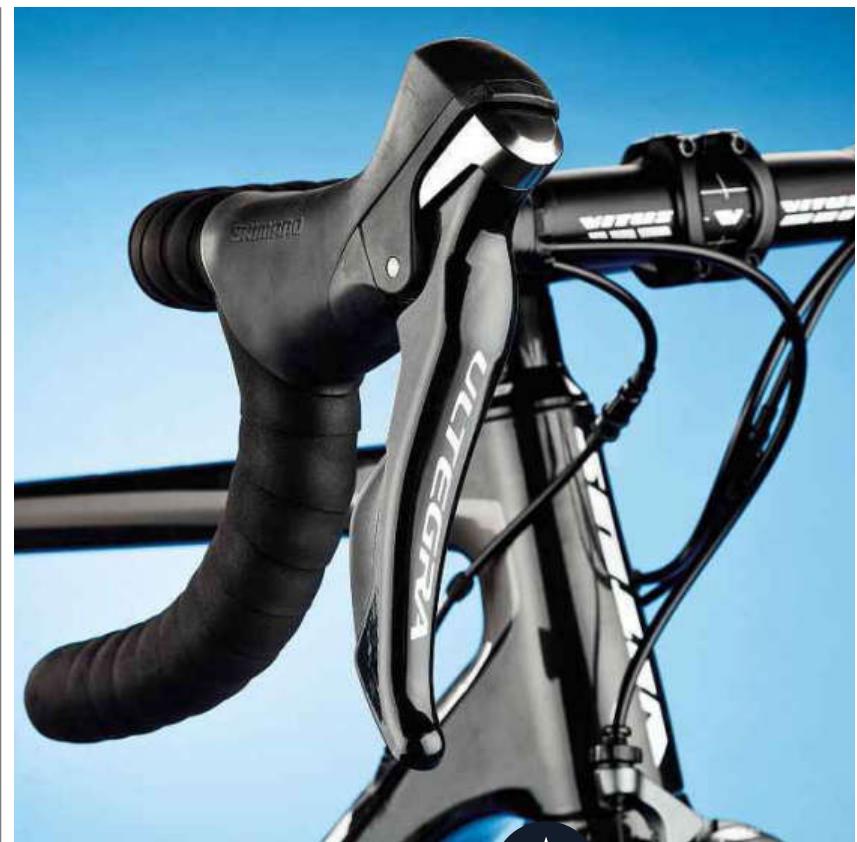
Shifting is smooth, even under load. The engagement of cogs is always positive, and the front mech especially works perfectly with the left-hand lever. The Ultegra brakes are easily metered, and offer reliable performance. Are they worth the extra money for the sake of saving 16g per calliper over 105 kit? That's debatable. What's undeniable, however, is that performance for a £1,900 bike is astonishing. The Vitesse Evo could handle a sportive or a road race with equal aplomb, as long as a magic carpet ride isn't top of your list of priorities. On smoother tarmac, especially on rolling terrain, none of the other bikes come close to the pin-sharp cornering ability and efficiently stiff ride the Vitus gives.

The spec

Frameset: The Vitus Vitesse Evo's frame is made from high-modulus (ie stiff) T700 carbon fibre. The tapered head tube should further improve stiffness and aid quicker direction changes, while the massively oversize, square-profiled down tube allied to a tapered seat tube that flares as it joins the BB386EVO bottom bracket creates a super-stiff platform from which to get every watt to the ground.

At 975mm on our size 54, the Vitesse has the shortest wheelbase of any of the bikes on test. Add to that a 73° head angle and this has all the makings of a quick-turning, aggressive road bike. Cables are routed internally, adding to the elegant overall look of the bike.

Groupset: The Vitus has the most comprehensive array of Ultegra components of any of our test bikes, the only concessions to cost-cutting being a KMC 11-speed chain and Shimano 105 11-25 cassette. It's no surprise to find a compact chainset here, even on a race-spec machine. With the right combination of ratios on the cassette it's arguable



that many riders could benefit from a compact for everyday road riding and climbing.

Finishing kit: We encountered Vitus's own-brand finishing kit on the aluminium Zenium SL in last month's test, and know the alloy stem and swept-back bars to be a comfortable set-up. Fitted to the Vitesse Evo's carbon frame, they should have less vibration to dampen. There's an adequate amount of flex at the extent of the handlebar drops, but nothing that will stop you levering the bike up a mountain with maximum efficiency.

The Wheels: At this price, the quality of the wheelset will generally improve from stock training hoops, and while the Mavic Ksyriums are not what we'd use for racing, for a £320 wheelset, they're strong all-rounders. The Yksion Elite tyres aren't the lightest or quickest tyres but in the 25mm size used here, should provide a comfortable ride. ⚡



An oversized down tube, flared seat tube and BB386EVO bottom bracket (above) provide a stiff platform for efficient power transfer; Ultegra brakes (right) are easily metered and reliable



RATING

FRAME

Stiffness is the watchword here, with racy geometry

COMPONENTS

The most complete Ultegra groupset on test

WHEELS

Good value, solid wheels but could be lighter

THE RIDE

Not the most comfy but wonderfully fast and agile

OVERALL

8.3
10

Astonishing performance for a £1,900 bike – it'll put a maniacal grin on your face!

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Vitus Vitesse Evo

Rapid, responsive, cohesive and comfortable – the Vitesse rocks our world!



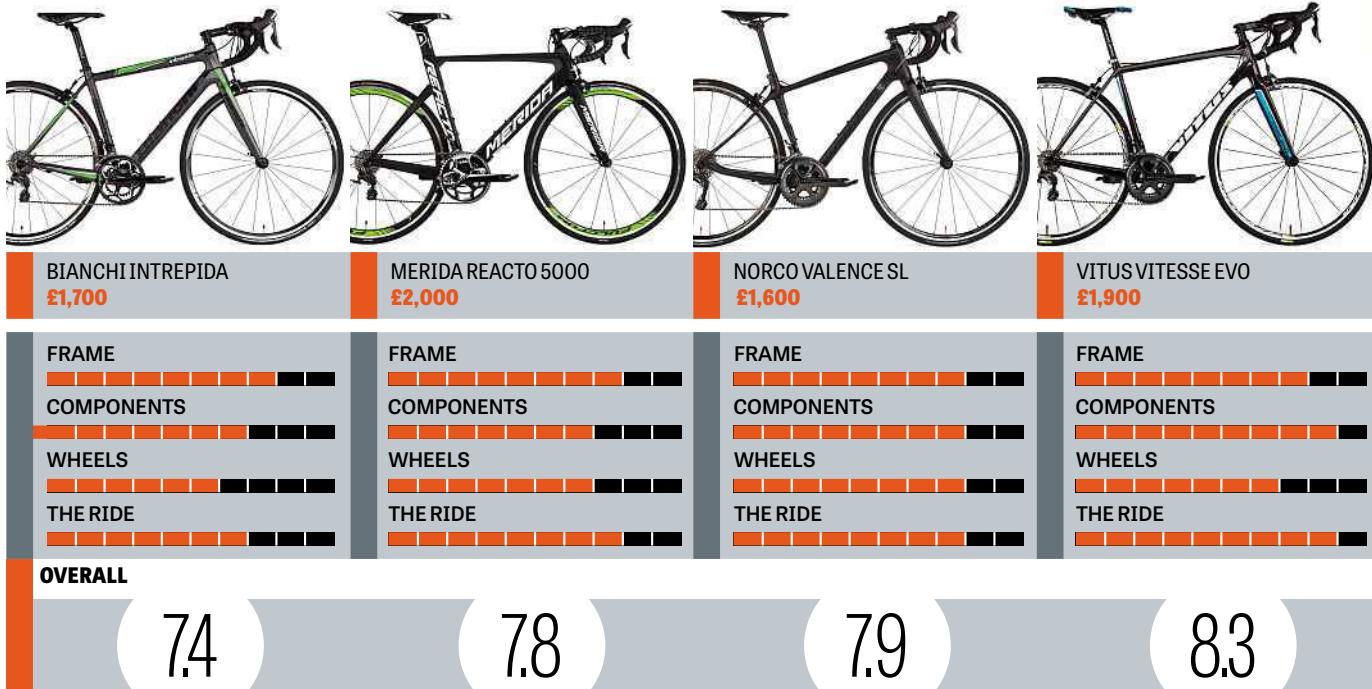
On the face of it, awarding the victory to the most Ultegra-complete bike of the bunch looks like an obvious choice. Potential buyers should automatically plump for the one that has the most high-tech bits and bobs on it, right? Well, not quite... Things are never quite as obvious as they seem where similarly specced bikes are involved, and beyond the way in which the Vitus Vitesse Evo's groupset works so harmoniously, the other two deciding factors that helped the Evo beat all comers were its frameset and price.

You could race this bike either as a fourth-cat newbie or if you're chasing points for your first-cat licence. The level of feel and responsiveness in this package makes it a potential race winner, while its reasonable level of compliance also make it a very good bike for longer, more gentle rides. Full Ultegra, race and sportive-ready, for £1,900? It's a steal. A new set of wheels and some carefully chosen Dura-Ace upgrades would get it under the magical 7kg barrier, too.

As for the other bikes, let's tackle Norco's Valence SL and Bianchi's Intrepida together, since they're both aimed at the same kind of rider. The Norco gets the nod over the Bianchi on three counts: its matched Ultegra shifters and chainset are a joy to use, it's £100 cheaper, and – thanks in part to its very good wheelset – 860g lighter. Throw a set of higher-spec wheels into the Bianchi's mix, plus a better set of handlebars, and you'd have a bike that's as good as the Norco, albeit at the same price as the Merida. Talking of which...

Merida's Reacto 5000 surprised us with its comfort levels, and demonstrated composure combined with agile handling. Perhaps it isn't quite versatile enough to be the bike we'd choose for everyday riding if we were lucky enough to have all four of these in our garage, but if your focus is on hard, fast rides, it's a great choice. Otherwise, you'd be a fool not to take the Vitus Vitesse Evo for a test ride.

HOW THEY STACK UP...



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Sportful Fiandre NoRain bibtights, £125, c3products.com
Kask Protone helmet, £195, velobrands.co.uk
Oakley Radar EV Prism shades, £145, oakley.com
Sidi, Wire Air Vernice shoes, £300, bigbear.co.uk

MEET THE £1K WONDERS, p20

Smith Overtake helmet, £200, saddleback.co.uk
Pivlock V2 Max shades, £120, saddleback.co.uk
Assos T.campionissimo_s7 bibshorts, £295, ss.mille_evo7 jersey, £100, yellow-limited.com

Endura FS260 bibshorts, £70, jersey, £50, endurasport.com
Castelli Alpha W jacket, £230, Illumina knickers, £80, castellicafe.co.uk

WHAT'S STOPPING YOU p50

Lazer Z1 helmet, £200, madison.co.uk
Salice 011 CRX shades, £75, salice.co.uk
Galibier Crono Aero gloves, £14, galibier.cc
Madison Road Race jersey, £60, Tour bibshorts, £38, madison.co.uk
Giro Empire shoes, £230, zyro.co.uk

£2,000 ULTEGRA BIKES, p88

Specialized Prevail helmet, £160, specialized.com
Oakley Radar EV Prizm shades, £145, oakley.com

Alé PRR Bermuda jersey, £90, bibshorts, £95, paligap.cc

Bont Blitz shoes, £180, saddleback.co.uk
dhb Blok Micro Roubaix jersey £40 and Blok bibshorts, £50, wiggle.co.uk
Le Col Pro jersey, £120, lecol.net
Primal Thermal knickers, £75, primeurope.com
Sportful, Bodyfit Pro Race jersey, £90, bibshorts £85, c3products.com

COLD-FREE CYCLING, p116

Lazer, Z1 helmet, £200, madison.co.uk
Vulpine Thermal Storm cap, £35, vulpine.cc
Altura Peloton LS Night Vision jersey, £60, altura.co.uk
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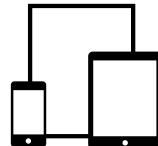
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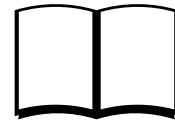
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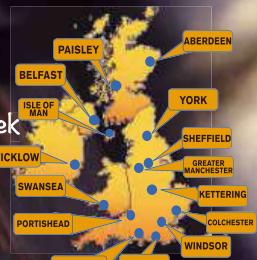
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RIDING

DON'T LOSE, SNOOZE!

Want to be a winner in the saddle? Then you need to maximise your kip!

1 WARM, NOT SWEATING

'The optimum temperature for sleep is 16-18°C,' says Guy Meadows of London's Sleep School. 'That's quite cold but highlights why we often struggle to sleep on a hot night. It's also why I recommend turning your radiator off at night. You should use blankets instead of a big duvet, too, as you can more easily regulate temperature.'

2 BANISH SUPPER

Timing of food consumption impacts quality of sleep. Shona Halson, sleep expert at the Australian Institute of Sport, recommends eating two to three hours before bed. 'You need time to digest the bulk of the food. If you go to bed too full, you'll wake up wanting the bathroom. Likewise, go to bed on an empty stomach and you'll awake early through hunger.'

3 LIGHTEN THE AIR

'Humidity can affect sleep quality,' adds Guy Meadows with the ideal around the 50% mark. This isn't easily monitored but you can increase humidity with a humidifier. 'Conversely, you can decrease it by letting fresh air circulate,' he says. 'That applies to winter as well, when it's worth leaving your bedroom window slightly ajar – unless it's freezing, of course.'

4 NOT-SO SMARTPHONE

All artificial light is thought to inhibit the release of melatonin. As that's the key hormone responsible for making us sleepy, experts suggest that ideally you don't look at a screen within two to three hours of bedtime. This might be unrealistic for TV fans, but maybe a self-imposed ban on updating your Strava account in bed is an idea!

5 SQUEEZE OUT THE BAD

'Muscle soreness after a heavy session can keep you awake,' explains Shona Halson. 'That's why compression socks or massages are useful.' Both are designed to flush out toxins and ease sore muscles. While daily massages can be a pricey luxury, compression tights from manufacturers like 2XU and Compressport start at a fairly reasonable £40.



Mile stacker

Get more saddle time says Ironman legend Mark Kleanthous...

→ There's no getting away from it that time in the saddle means you acclimatise to being on a bike in a similar position. It's also a time for your undercarriage to harden up to riding for hours in that position, too!

Racking up long, steady miles also develops your aerobic system. This allows your body to maximise oxygen use, and produce energy for a longer period of time. More efficient use of oxygen taps into the stores of fat in your body, which deliver nine calories per gram, compared to four calories per gram of carbohydrate. If you can race harder using these stored fats, then you'll find you can ride both faster and longer.

If your main goal is a sportive of 80 miles plus, you'll need to know about things like pacing, nutrition and hydration before you set off. Fail to get any of these right on the day and you could struggle to reach the finish line. How will you know, for instance, how many calories you need to perform to your best over 80 miles if you only train to 20 in practice?

Beyond the obvious sporting benefits, these long rides also give you time to clear your head from the stresses of the week. And no one sleeps better than a cyclist who's been out for three hours – just ask my wife!

Mark Kleanthous is a triathlon and cycling coach who calculates he's pedalled more than 185,000 miles including John O'Groats to Land's End in five days. See ironmate.co.uk for more details.

Perfect your pedalling

With technique the great leveller in any activity, there are easy wins to be gained from getting your footwork right

As soon as you take your first pedal stroke sans stabilisers, that's it – your technique's sorted. All that's left now is to have fun, boost your fitness and rack up the miles, right? Wrong. Pedalling is like any sporting technique. There's a right way to do it. And there's an all-over-the-gaff wrong way to do it.

Look at David Millar. He was regarded as having 'souplesse' – the French term for someone with a fluid, elegant pedalling style. Millar was poetry in motion but, like all levels of rider, his style began with getting his bike set up correctly.

SET-UP FUNDAMENTALS

'At the end of the day we're looking to achieve a nice, neutral-balanced position on pedal stroke,' says bike-fitter and physiotherapist John Dennis. 'Key to this is having the centre of your knee over the pedal spindle when it's in the three o'clock position, and your knee slightly bent when at the six o'clock position.'

Further studies and experts like cycling coach Dr Auriel Forrester suggest that to then optimise power output you should push from the one o'clock position right

through to seven o'clock. This maximises the power generated from the large quadriceps muscles (at the front of the thigh).

Research shows that the most effective transfer of power from the downstroke to the upstroke is through a technique called 'ankling'. Essentially this involves a lowering of heels as you go down and a lifting of heels as the pedal begins its upward movement. The advice is to picture yourself scraping mud off the bottom of your shoe, as this encourages power transfer all the way around the pedal stroke, eliminating the deadspot.

Another useful drill here is one-legged cycling. Simply, you unclip one shoe – if using clipless – and pedal with the other. By removing one leg from the equation, you can't help but work through the whole stroke. Fail to and you'll stall and fall. So probably best practise this on

'There's a right way to peddle, and there's an all-over-the-gaff wrong way to do it'

a turbo trainer. Or an abandoned country lane where there are no small children to laugh at you should you take a tumble.

TRAINING TOOL

If you're really looking to hone pedal technique, an innovative training tool like the WattBike is useful. It measures the force generated from each leg and transmits that data to its head unit, which displays the results on a graph with a cross in the middle. Left of the central vertical line corresponds to the force from your left leg; right of it obviously corresponds to force from your right leg. As you pedal, a dotted shape is plotted on a graph.

Riders of different abilities produce different pedal-force shapes. For instance, a sideways figure-of-eight reveals the cyclist is losing too much momentum in the transition from right to left leg, and left to right. One remedy is to ensure you're properly attached in the toe cage or to use clipless pedals. This'll help you pull your thigh into the 'up' position. The ideal to aim for on these graph is a large, rounded sausage shape as it shows good momentum throughout.

THE PERFECT 360

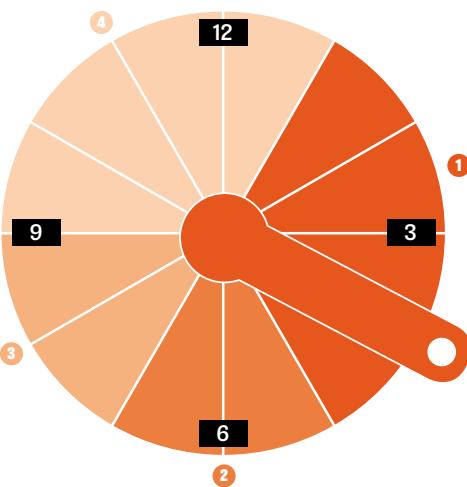
Insider advice: The four key steps to a perfectly efficient pedal stroke...

1 Imagine the pedal stroke as a clock face. The first phase is from one o'clock to five o'clock. Push down with your heel but activate your hamstrings, too, so your foot extends forwards. This creates an even circular motion.

3 Moving from seven o'clock to nine o'clock, ensure you pull up. Fail to do so and the other leg that's now generating more power as it's on the downstroke, will have to work harder to continue the pedal stroke.

2 Five o'clock to seven o'clock sees you prepare for the backstroke. Engage your calf muscles here, slightly pointing your toe downwards. This is the 'scraping mud off the bottom of your shoe' part.

4 From nine o'clock through to one o'clock, you're working towards a new downstroke. To continue the 'even circle', imagine that you're pulling your knee towards the handlebars, and raise your heel slightly. And that's it!





CYCLE STRENGTH

A spot of weight training can improve your riding performance...

With the weather deteriorating and less light hours to roam the UK roads, adding a gym workout or two to your winter training's a tempting prospect. And one that's worth it.

To improve your strength and endurance, simply try these three essential exercises. For all three, perform three sets of 12, 10 and finally eight reps. To improve your strength over time, simply increase the weights you're working with.

Words: James Wits

WHAT DUMBBELL SQUAT

WHY This strengthens quads and hamstrings for a more powerful pedal stroke, it improves core stability, too – ie the strength in your body's trunk – vital for transferring power from you to your bike.

HOW Stand tall, feet slightly wider apart than your hips, and hold a dumbbell in either hand, arms down at your sides, palms facing towards you. Keeping your back straight, bend your legs and lower your hips until your upper thighs are parallel to the ground. From here, push back up to the starting position.

WHAT LEG PRESS

WHY Similar benefits to the squat but is less demanding as it doesn't activate the core to the same degree. So better for cyclists with creaky lower backs!

HOW This is a similar template to the squat but sitting down on a leg-press machine. Position the seat so that your knee angle is at 90° and your feet are flat against the push board. Again, your feet should be just wider than your hips. Push the stack until your legs are fully extended. Now in a controlled movement return the stack to the starting position.

WHAT HAMSTRING CURLS

WHY Your hamstrings spend a lot of time lifting your heels toward your bum in the upstroke. Which means they're consistently being shortened. This excellent exercise stretches them out as well as adding strength.

HOW Lie face down on the leg curl machine, with your legs out straight, ankles clamped behind the foot rest. This is the starting position. Breathing in, lift your heels toward your bum before breathing out as you return to the starting position in a controlled movement.

Resuscitate a punctured tube

Pop a patch on burst inner tubes and send them back into action!

As real cyclists, we pride ourselves on knowing how to take care of our machines. Patching tubes for us is the mark of a true man – not just because we're careful with a penny! It's the first repair most riders ever attempt, so whether you haven't patched a tube since childhood – or never learnt in the first place – our quick and easy guide will show you how to do it properly for a repair that lasts...

TOP TIP: Get a quality puncture kit like those made by Rema, not some cheap horror from the pound shop.



PUMP IT

Having removed it from the wheel, partially inflate the tube. You may be able to hear where the air is leaking. If not, wet your lips and run them alongside the tube – you'll feel the rush of cold air, helping you to locate the hole.



DUNK IT

Still can't find the leak? Submerge the tube. Any emerging bubbles will lead you to the source. If the hole is longer than a couple of millimetres or located around the valve stem, abandon the tube. We repeat, abandon the tube.



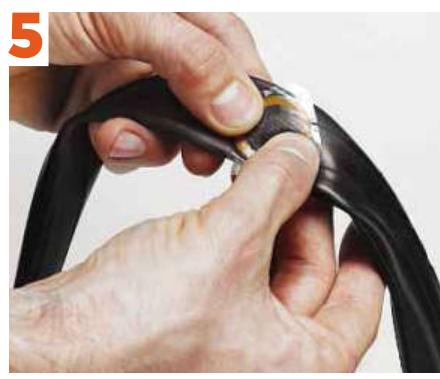
PREP IT

With the hole located, give the surrounding area a quick scuff with a square of emery cloth, taking care to remove any raised edges. Ideally give it a wipe with alcohol or a similar non-oily solvent if possible.



SQUEEZE IT

Squeeze the vulcanising solution directly onto the tube. Don't go mad, a thin layer is sufficient. Leave the solution to cure (dry) for around five minutes. It'll turn from shiny to dull once it's ready. Be careful not to touch it.



PUSH IT

Apply the patch over the hole. Push down firmly for a minute or two. Then, after 10 minutes remove the backing from the patch. Good quality ones will often split from the centre like a blister – avoid pulling up the edges of the patch.



TALC IT

Dust the whole area with talc. This'll stop the tube sticking to the inside of the tyre. Inflate slightly and leave overnight to check the patch is airtight before returning to service. And that's it, you can now fix tyres. Truly, you are a cycling god! ☘



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Cold-free cycling

Defy the season – and statistics – and fend off the unwanted advances of the winter cold...

According to the NHS, there's an 80% increase in colds during the winter. For those readers who might have just moved here from sub-Saharan Africa and have never encountered one, the symptoms include a sore throat, runny nose, sneezing and a cough. Usually it clears up within a week or two but it's still flipping annoying.

There's no definitive reason why colds become more prevalent in the winter, but there are numerous ways to reduce your chances of ending up a snuffling, snotty mess, and one of the key methods requires man's basic necessity: heat.

KILL THE CHILL

'Animal furs were traditionally used by people in very cold environments for their insulation properties,' says apparel technology expert Dr Tom Waller. 'These days, whether you're on the bike or off it, it's clear that layering systems are the ideal, as they trap warm air.' We're talking base layers, cycle T-shirt and bike jacket; overshoes; and thermal underwear and long bib tights. You can also go for a thick pair of gloves or two thinner pairs. And how does this stop colds and flu? Shivering is

'Despite Jack Frost wreaking havoc, heading outdoors is actually your best bet of remaining snot free!'

the body's natural method of warming itself up, but it's also been proven that it depresses the immune system. Keeping warm means less shivering, and less chance of catching a cold. Simple, eh?

And despite Jack Frost wreaking havoc, heading outdoors is actually your best bet of remaining snot-free. 'Many people in the UK are deficient in vitamin D in the winter because our body creates most of its vitamin D from receiving direct sunlight (and the UVB rays) onto the skin,' explains Dr Will Mangar of blood-profiling outfit InDurance. 'It's known to absorb calcium from the diet so is essential for bone health. But a deficiency in vitamin D has also been linked to upper respiratory tract infection.'

So heading outdoors as much as you can between 11am and 3pm this winter is the ideal

way to top Vitamin D up. Otherwise consider a supplement, and eating more fatty fish like tuna, mackerel and salmon which are rich in it.

LEARN FROM THE PROS

Another reason to layer up is that the rise in colds is linked to people being closer together physically during the winter. Crowded trains and buses are the perfect breeding place for infections to pass from one individual to another. Of course, unless you live in a cave, these situations are usually unavoidable. So what can you do about it? Well, you could always try taking a leaf out of Team Sky's book. Dave Brailsford's black and blue army are renowned for pepping races and their training camps with antimicrobial hand sanitisers to keep riders germ-free. While that might seem a touch OCD, there's no harm in keeping a small hand gel in your pocket. After all, if it's good enough for Froome...

Words: James Wits

The truth about colds

It's hard to separate truth from myth when it comes to the common cold. But, goddammit, we'll try...

FEED A COLD, STARVE A FEVER

MYTH

Being sick often kills your appetite, so trying to force down a pasta bake won't help. More important is staying hydrated. This is especially true if you're running a temperature and sweating pints, and that fluid needs replacing. This is where the old favourite – Lucozade Original – comes in. An easily quaffed carbohydrate drink, it'll rehydrate you and deliver cold-crushing calories.

VITAMIN C KILLS A COLD

TRUTH

Your morning smoothie might just be doing the business. Researcher Harri Hemilä at Helsinki University examined studies over two decades, involving over 11,000 people, and concluded that while vitamin C supplements had little effect for sedentary folk, those who exercised regularly did benefit from the extra hit of vitamin C. So snaffle a fresh orange every day to keep colds at bay!

YOU LOSE MOST OF YOUR HEAT THROUGH YOUR HEAD

MYTH

'Most of your body heat is lost through your heads' is a traditional winter script, so heading out for a bike without some form of head cap on is nonsensical. Or so you'd think. A 2008 study in the British Medical Journal found that as the head makes up around 7% of body's surface area, you actually lose no more than 10% of your body heat through your bonce.

YOU CAN RIDE OFF A COLD

MAYBE!

It's hard to give a definitive here as, oddly, infecting subjects with colds and then getting them to cycle doesn't get past many ethical committees. That said, many experts suggest the 'neck check' remains a solid enough method for assessment. In other words, if the symptoms are above the neck, like a runny nose, cycle on. If it's below, like a chesty cough, then leave your Boardman gathering dust.



Say no to SAD

How to defeat Seasonal Affective Disorder

➤ Those who doubt SAD (seasonal affective disorder, a type of depression triggered by lack of sunlight) is real only need to cast their eyes over to Sweden.

The Scandinavian country averages just five miserly hours of weak sunlight in mid-winter, and has over one million SAD sufferers. That's around a tenth of their population. In fact, so extreme is the problem, that light cafés are booming with commuters often stopping off for a coffee and a blast of UV-free light of up to 3,000 lux. Presumably while sitting on Ikea furniture. And listening to Abba.

➤ But the problem isn't just confined to the snowy lands to our north. The problem exists in this country, too, with an estimated 7% of the population affected. But what causes SAD? We asked a brainy person. 'Light has acute effects on hormone levels, which can affect mood, alertness and performance,' Victoria Revell, an expert in chronobiology (the study of biological rhythms) at Surrey University told us. 'So in the winter SAD individuals produce less serotonin [feel-good hormone] than at other times of the year.'

➤ But all is not lost, according to our expert. 'A lightbox is a useful investment, as long as it delivers a minimum 2,500 lux.' These boxes of erm, light, from companies like Lumie, offer far more intense light than your office or home and vary in price from around £40 to £200. Around 30mins to an hour a day is recommended with many SAD cyclists planting one in front of their bike while turbo training.

➤ 'If you have a choice, morning light exposure's the ideal,' adds Revell. 'Your circadian clock runs slightly longer in the winter due to lack of morning light. That makes it even harder to get up. Using a lightbox when the alarm goes off, or a dawn simulator where light gradually increases for the last half hour of sleep, will benefit both your body clock and how you're feeling.' Seems like a bright idea to us. 



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OUT THERE

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Long Mynd p120

CLASSIC CLIMB

Alto del Angliru p124

SPORTIVE PLANNER 2016

Tour o' the Borders p126

CLUB RUN

Honister 92 p127

UK RIDE

North York Moors p128



LONG MYND

BikesEtc hits the English/Welsh border to tackle one of Britain's toughest climbs

WHERE: LONG MYND, SHROPSHIRE

TOTAL DISTANCE: 83KM

TOTAL ELEVATION: 1,850M

Local folklore has it that if you look east from the top of Long Mynd you won't see another high point of land until the Urals in Russia over 2,000 miles away. You'd need bloody good eyesight, but we take the point. Long Mynd is high. Not as high as some roads you'd find in North Wales, say, or Cumbria, but high enough and quite rightly a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. And although relatively small in area, it packs in some of the best roads in the UK, and more than a few killer climbs.

Meeting in Church Stretton, *BikesEtc*'s Matt Page is joined by riders who both work in local bike shops, Helen Wainright from Dave Mellor Cycles and Nick Morris from Clee Cycles. Their route is a figure of eight, starting with a shorter warm-up loop, before heading onto the mighty Long Mynd itself. Matt takes up the tale...

'Heading east, across the A49 and towards Hope Bowdler the road pitches up, and Nick and Helen disappear into the distance. So much for the warm-up! The climb is short, thankfully, and the next section offers a chance to ride extremely quiet roads, with tall hedges each side that make it feel even narrower than they are. Having lucked out with a blue sky, we're all eager to climb high and see the views.'

'Passing back through Church Stretton ➔





England's green and pleasant land never looked quite so pretty

WE WORK
UP THE
NOTORIOUS
BURWAY
CLIMB
PASSING THE
20% SIGN AS
CIVILISATION
FADES BELOW

THE ROUTE

- **GPS DOWNLOAD** cyclist.co.uk/14Shropshire
- **DISTANCE** 83km
- **CLIMBING** 1,850m
- **TIME** 3.5-5 hours

Leave Church Stretton, heading east and away from the Long Mynd. Follow the small loop, through the villages of Hope Bowdler, Tickerton, Marshbrook and Little Stretton before returning to Church Stretton, feeling warmed up. Take a left in the town centre and up The Burway – enjoy the views. Towards the top, bear right, heading north and enjoy the

fantastic descent to Ratlinghope. The middle section is constantly undulating on smaller roads with great climbs up on the Long Mynd at the northern side and up to the Stiperstones. The Bog Visitor Centre is a welcome stop. From here, the route is less severe and includes the only A-road section – a brief 4km on the A488. Asterton Bank is a killer, but at least you can put everything into it, knowing that it's all downhill from there to the finish. Church Stretton is jammed with cafés, pubs and takeaways to help you refuel after a testing day in the saddle.





The moorland plateau of the Long Mynd provides respite from the climbing



after 20km we press on, although it would be a handy place to stop as it's rammed full of cafés. We work up the notorious Burway climb, passing the ominous 20% sign just as civilisation fades below us. The views are staggering. On a day like today with blue skies barely bothered by clouds, we can clearly see the deep green moorland stretching all the way to the horizon. This section is popular with mountain bikers tempted by descents down the many valleys – or “batches” as the locals say.

The Burway climb is a long one, rising to almost 500m over 3km. Towards the highest point we shoot right and start the fantastic sweeping descent to Ratlinghope. Almost

immediately, we're thrown into the next climb, and heading into another area of the amazing Long Mynd – known to man since Neolithic times, when traders used routes through it to ply their wares. We stop to tweak a bike halfway up and enjoy a perfect chance to soak up the beauty of this ancient, unspoilt place.

‘Although the main road up the Burway was busy with traffic, we've not seen a car since we veered off the main drag. Nick tells us how he once got it all wrong coming down the hill in the opposite direction and ended up veering off into the bushes. Luckily, he escaped with nothing more than injured pride, but it's a reminder that Long Mynd needs to be

THE STEEPNESS DOESN'T RELENT – SUCCESS MEANS DIGGING DEEP

HIGHLIGHTS

As well as a host of amazing views, there are plenty of other things to pique your interest along the way

THE BURWAY

The classic road climb out of Church Stretton is rightly considered one of the UK's hardest climbs. Starting steep and pitching up to a 20% gradient at its steepest, it eases off a little, but climbs continuously without a break, averaging a 9% gradient. Take the time to admire the views at the top, though – you've earned them.



THE BOG VISITOR CENTRE

After a challenging 55km ride, the Bog Visitor Centre was a welcome stop, especially as cafés are thin on the ground after leaving Church Stretton. There's also a killer cake selection and you can get a decent cup of tea, too. It's worth noting that they don't take cards and are closed over winter from November to March. More info at bogcentre.co.uk

ASTERTON BANK

An evil monster of a climb and all the worse for being the last one on the route. It may only be a mere 1km long, but with a savage 17% average gradient, it's a shocker. Once the gradient kicks up at the start the climb, it doesn't let up until the gliding club. Anyone with eyes on the Strava King Of The Mountain will have to beat Liam Holohan, the local Madison-Genesis rider who holds the record of 5mins 32secs.

Words: Matt Page Photography: Anthony Pease



The brutal Asterton Bank: don't stop pedalling until you see the gliders

respected, not just admired. As we move along the twisting climb and back to the plateau, we get another bike-stopping view of the open, flat country leading north and east.

The descent off the northern end is straight and fast. We tuck in and divebomb down, before turning left towards the Stiperstones, another distinctive hill with large jagged rocks across the ridge. We follow the ridge low down at first, before turning sharp right to one of the day's toughest climbs. Spurred on by the promise of tea and cake on the other side, we defeat the gradient and drop down to a place known as The Bog and pull up at its visitor centre to refuel. Housed in a quirky Victorian

school building, there's free Wi-Fi and a great selection of cakes. There's no posh coffee, but a perfect cup of tea more than makes up for it.

'We leave the centre, our bellies straining with cake, and settle into the relative ease of the next 20km which is no less scenic, but far easier on the legs. Talk turns to the final hill as its fearsome reputation precedes it. Nick has ridden Asterton Bank and describes it thus: "It starts steep, stays steep and doesn't seem to end. It's brutal and it's great!"

'Nick's words don't inspire confidence, but before we know it, it's too late as the lower slopes draw us in. We pass the signs warning of the gradient and the barriers they use to close

the road off with when the peak is swallowed by snow in the winter. Turning left, the road pitches up, and suddenly we're all scrabbling for gears. The gradient doesn't relent. At all. Getting to the top means digging deep.

'As the road finally levels out, we realise just how high we've come as we encounter a gliding centre. We stop briefly to admire the landing techniques, before pushing on to the final leg and the thrilling, twisty descent down The Burway. Back in Church Stretton, with our legs feeling the burn from the ride, we all agree it's been a great day out in wonderful scenery. The Long Mynd is known as a classic route for a reason – it's as beautiful as it is challenging. 



ALTO DEL ANGLIRU

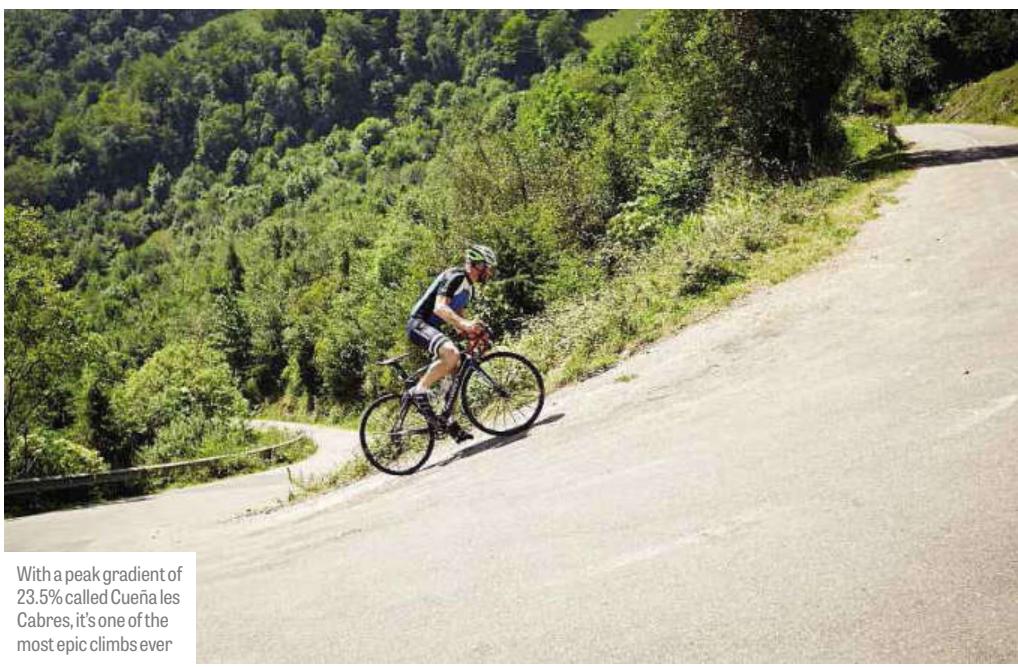
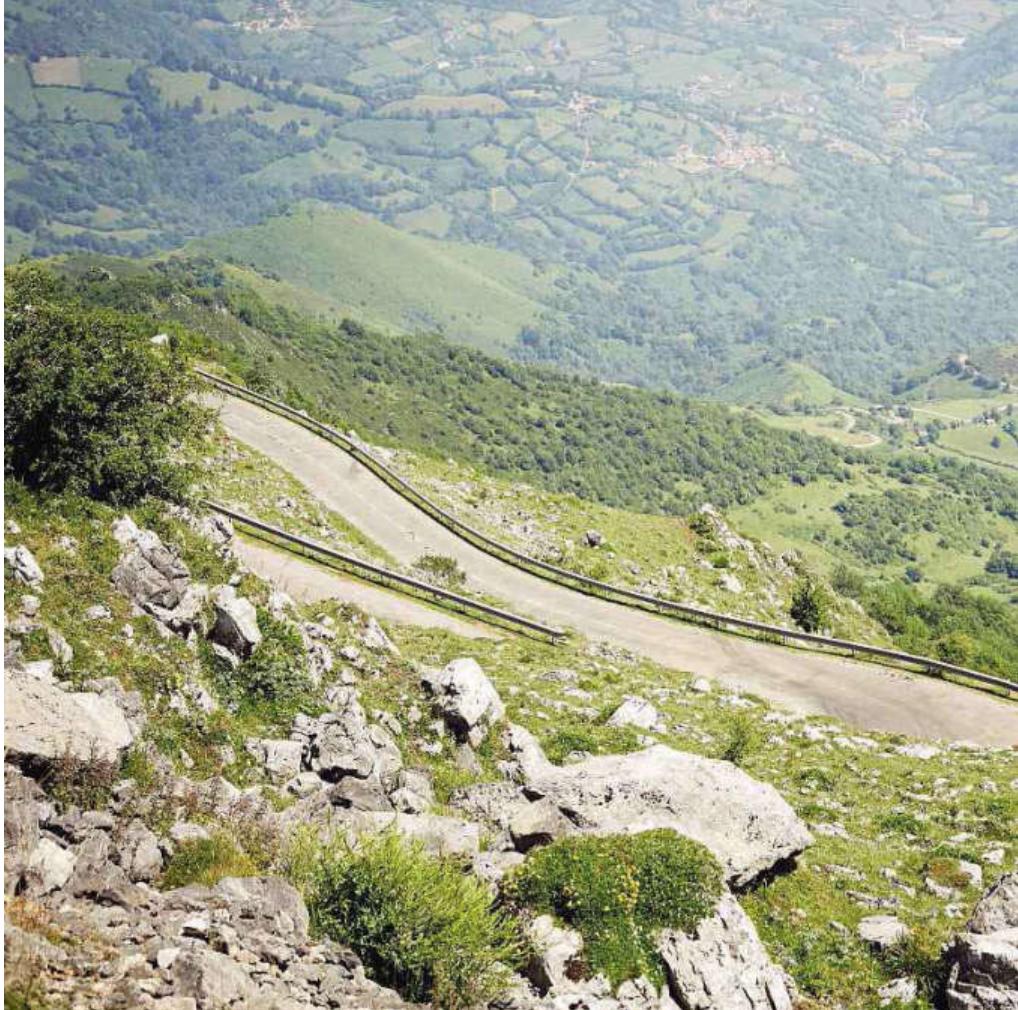
This Spanish shocker has forced pros to quit, but it's an unexpected treasure

The name of northern Spain's most notorious climb is enough to strike fear into professional riders, let alone amateurs. Since its first inclusion in the Vuelta a España in 1999, Angliru, or La Gamonal, has caused controversy. Its savage incline, which peaks at 23.5%, has even forced World Tour riders to dismount and give up. In stage 15 of the 2002 Vuelta David Millar unpinned his race number and quit less than a metre from the line having crashed three times in pouring rain. It's that kind of climb.

Averaging 9.9% for 12.5km the ascent starts gently, winding through woodland and alpine meadows, peaking at around 8% at kilometre five and then flattening out after the Mirador del Angliru hotel – a natural pause before the real challenge starts. From the mid point, the average gradient is 13% and the landscape becomes exposed and barren. And if that isn't enough, riders are then faced with a brutal ramp of 23.5% called Cueña les Cabres followed by a stretch of 18% and then 21%. Enough to make grown men weep.

The Angliru's vicious nature has angered pro team managers who argue that asking riders to race the 12.5km beast is too much. Alejandro Valverde's former team manager Vicente Belda of team Kelme once asked of the race officials, 'Do they want blood?'

VICENTE BELDA ASKED: 'DO THEY WANT BLOOD?'



With a peak gradient of 23.5% called Cueña les Cabres, it's one of the most epic climbs ever

With the summit at 1,573m, it doesn't rival the Alps for altitude, but with 3km or so to go, the average gradient hits 17.5% for a kilometre (before easing off to 13%), which makes it one of the toughest climbs in world cycling.

There's only one route to the summit from the village of La Vega-Riosa, which lies right at the foot of the mountain, so there's little chance of getting lost, and on the way up you can recce the technical descent back down.

A pro would hope to conquer the snaking route in around 44 minutes – Spaniard Roberto Heras holds the course record of 41.55 minutes, with an average speed of 18.32kmh. For anyone else, if you can keep

your average speed above 10kmh and ride in a straight line, you deserve a standing ovation.

Although the pros complain about the inclusion in the Vuelta, it has made for some of the race's most spectacular moments...

In stage 20 of the 2013 Vuelta, the slopes of Alto del Angliru were the scene of an epic battle between Chris Horner, who was just shy of his 42nd birthday, and Vincenzo Nibali, 14 years his junior. Nibali attacked Horner seven times on the climb, but it was Horner who crossed the line first – although he did collapse immediately afterwards.

Another bout of unforgettable theatre unfolded during stage 15 of the 2011 race. Red



Thrills, hills and bellyaching: the brutal summit climb has created plenty of controversy



DO IT YOURSELF

The route to Angliru's peak starts in La Vega-Riosa, a small village in Asturias in northern Spain. Its nearest airport is Asturias, near Oviedo – a 50-minute drive away. To find the climb, ride to La Vega-Riosa and follow the signs to Alto del Angliru or Gamoniteiro. The road heads southwest 12.5km to the summit. Marmot Tours (marmot-tours.co.uk) provide a tour of the mountain and Santa Cristina (hotelsantacristina.net) in Pola de Lena, 15km from La Vega, is a bike-friendly place to stay.

THE STATS

From: **La Vega**
Summit Height: **1573m**
Elevation: **1,248m**
Length: **12.5km**
Av gradient: **9.9%**
Max gradient: **23.5%**



SPAIN



RACE NUMBERS

18.32 KM/H

Roberto Heras's average speed on the climb in 2000

34x32

The gear ratio favoured by the pros riding the Angliru

1999

The first year the Angliru featured in the Vuelta

22

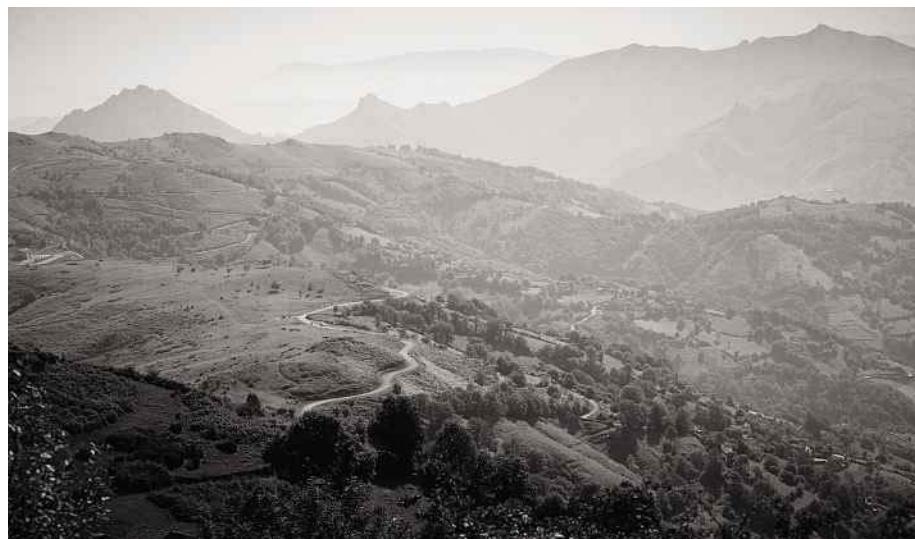
Kenny Elissonde's age when he won at the Angliru on stage 20 of the 2013 Vuelta

50 CM

Distance David Millar stopped from the finish line on stage 15 of the 2002 Vuelta in protest

jersey wearer Bradley Wiggins started off in front, then looked in danger of trading it in for a red face as he was dropped by a seemingly nuclear-powered Juan José Cobo (Geox-TMC), who kept going. And going. Cobo was chased by a fired-up Froome and Denis Menchov, but there was no catching him. Meanwhile a redlining Wiggo (who came fifth) was doing 'the paperboy weave' as Cobo crossed the line, later gasping, 'This is the biggest win of my life,' after a fuming Froome took fourth.

The Angliru is one of the hardest, most treasured climbs in the world, and if you fancy a taste of the action – and what reduced Wiggo to a sweaty wreck – head to Asturias. ☺





TOUR O'THE BORDERS

BikesEtc is lured to southern Scotland by the promise of traffic-free roads, challenging climbs and macaroni pies



WHEN: 7 AUGUST 2016 WHERE: PEEBLES, SCOTLAND DISTANCE 120KM/89KM COST: £58

BikesEtc: So, what's the appeal of the Tour o'the Borders?

Neil Dalgleish: Our region of Scotland has an enormous cycling community, not least driven by the fact that this is one of the best cycling destinations in the UK. We only have a population of about 10,000 in the area, and yet we have four separate cycling clubs and around 20% of kids cycle to school. We launched the first Tour o'the Borders five years ago and because the organisers and so many in the community are cyclists, we think that we have a good idea of what people want in a sportive. Combined with this, our aim was to create a spirit of friendliness at the event and give everyone a special Borders welcome.

BE: When and where does it happen?

ND: Similar to 2015, the 2016 event will be held on 7 August with two courses on offer; both on fully closed roads. The start and finish is in the historic town of Peebles. We haven't got a specific limit on the number of people who can enter at the moment, but to give you a guide as to the size of things, in 2015 we had 2,500 starters.

BE: What's the course like – is it one for beginners or a challenging route for more experienced riders?

ND: Both courses are pretty tough, the terrain is wild and the course is up and down throughout. The hardest bit would be the climb at Talla. It peaks at 452m and gets up to 20% in gradient in places, so it is challenge no matter how good a rider you are. At points, the course is pretty exposed to the elements, which provides its own challenges.

BE: What rider support is provided?

ND: We have plenty of marshals on the course and being on closed roads, riders don't have to worry about traffic. But it does create a headache for us. In 2015 we had to attend 18 separate safety briefings with local community groups, the council and the police. This shows the level of planning, organisation and investment in safety we put in. The other point to highlight is that over about half of the course there is no mobile phone coverage – we set up our own remote radio masts on hill tops so marshals can communicate to one another.

BE: Do you have mechanics too?

We do. In 2015 we had the Edinburgh Cycling Cooperative providing the support with static stations as well as motorbikes along the course. Also there was Markus Stitz, an endurance rider/cycling traveller on hand to help. He rode the whole course on a fixed-gear bike with a full set of tools and spares, stopping to help people along the way.

BE: What's on offer at feed stations?

ND: This is where we believe we really stand out from other sportives. We team up with Forsyth's, a local Peebles butcher and baker, to provide supplies at the stations. Most ordinary days, it is not uncommon for their queues to snake out of the door at their shop. We are famed for having their macaroni pies, a savoury delicacy which is brilliant for providing energy to get up the hills. The Big Bear bakery also provide other items, but we make a point of not having gels on offer. We do this to limit the rubbish that's left on the roads in what is such a beautiful part of the world. It's just one more small

thing to ensure that the event works in tandem with the community and the environment.

BE: Is there plenty to keep non-cyclists happy at the start/finish?

ND: The town has an enormous amount of history and its setting by the River Tweed and the numerous cafés and eateries means there is plenty to keep people occupied. There is a kids area, food stands, mobile phone charging points, massage tents and, of course, a bar. The finish funnels through the middle of Peebles, which is great for watching and gives riders a great sense of achievement when they cross the line.

BE: So the whole family can make a bit of a weekend of it?

ND: Absolutely, and if families don't want to stay in Peebles, the renowned Stobo Castle spa is just down the road. We also hold the event at the same time as the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, so if people are staying longer, they can catch a show or two.

BE: We can't talk about Scotland and not mention the weather...

ND: My advice is to come prepared for challenging conditions. Conditions in 2015 were fantastic, however, when we started the event it was held in April. In 2013 we moved it to later in the year after the road completely vanished under torrents of rain. We have it in August nowadays which gives us the best chance for good weather, but you have to remember that with climbs at over 400m you have more of a chance of inclement weather anyway – you may even find a little snow up there!



**CLOSED ROADS
MEAN RIDERS
DON'T HAVE TO
WORRY ABOUT
TRAFFIC**



CLUB RUN

LAKES LOOP

We head to the Lakes for one lucky club's regular ride...

Formed in 1992, Honister 92 Cycling Club is based in Whitehaven, just west of the Lake District National Park, giving it some of the most enviable riding in the country on its doorstep. It's perfect training ground for competitive riders, such as long-serving member Grant Law who has no fewer than 10 Fred Whitton Challenge rides under his belt – including a fourth place.

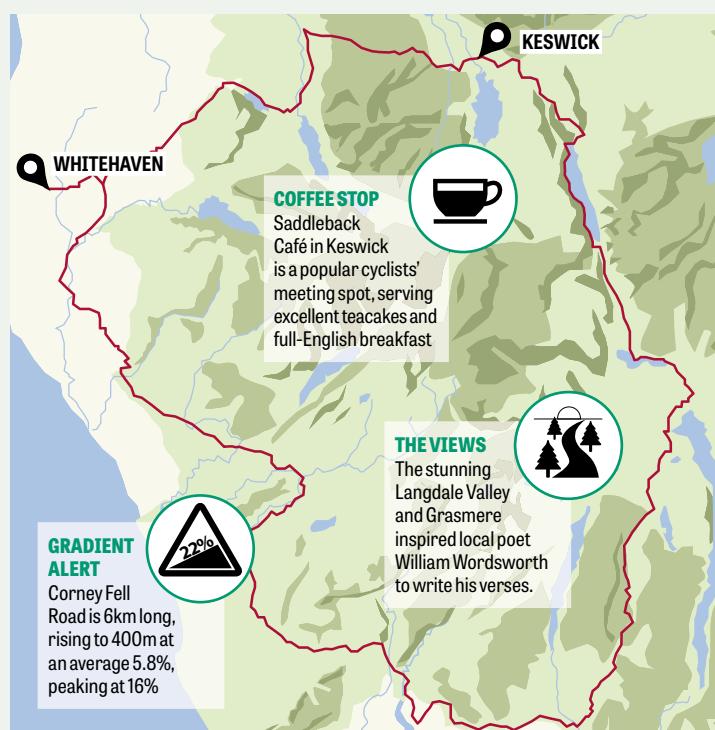
The weekly club run is a long or short affair, depending on experience and how you're feeling. Go long and you're looking at a 100-mile hilly ride with the club's heavy hitters; take the gentle route and the pace is more relaxed, with the distance around half. Both routes make time for a café stop – with views this good, pausing for coffee and cake is almost compulsory. ☕

HONISTER 92'S CLUB RUN

Snaking its way through the Lake District, this route offers great views and tough climbs



CLUB: Honister 92
BASED: Whitehaven, Cumbria
MEMBERS: 130
FORMED: 1992
MEETS: Mayfield School, Whitehaven, Cumbria 9.30am (two groups, 50 or 100 miles, including a café stop)
WEBSITE: honister92.com
STRAVA: strava.com/clubs/honister92



DISTANCE: 163KM TOTAL ELEVATION: 3,074M
DOWNLOAD THE ROUTE: CYCLIST.CO.UK/14LAKES

Want to see your club run in *BikesEtc*? Email us at bikesetc@dennis.co.uk



NORTH YORK MOORS

This stunning route is as challenging as they come

WHERE: N.YORKSHIRE MOORS

TOTAL DISTANCE: 130.4KM

TOTAL ELEVATION: 2,233M

Where does the route start?

Rosedale Abbey is a small village in the Rydale area of North Yorkshire. Set in the heart of the North York Moors national park, the nearest towns are Pickering and Castleton.

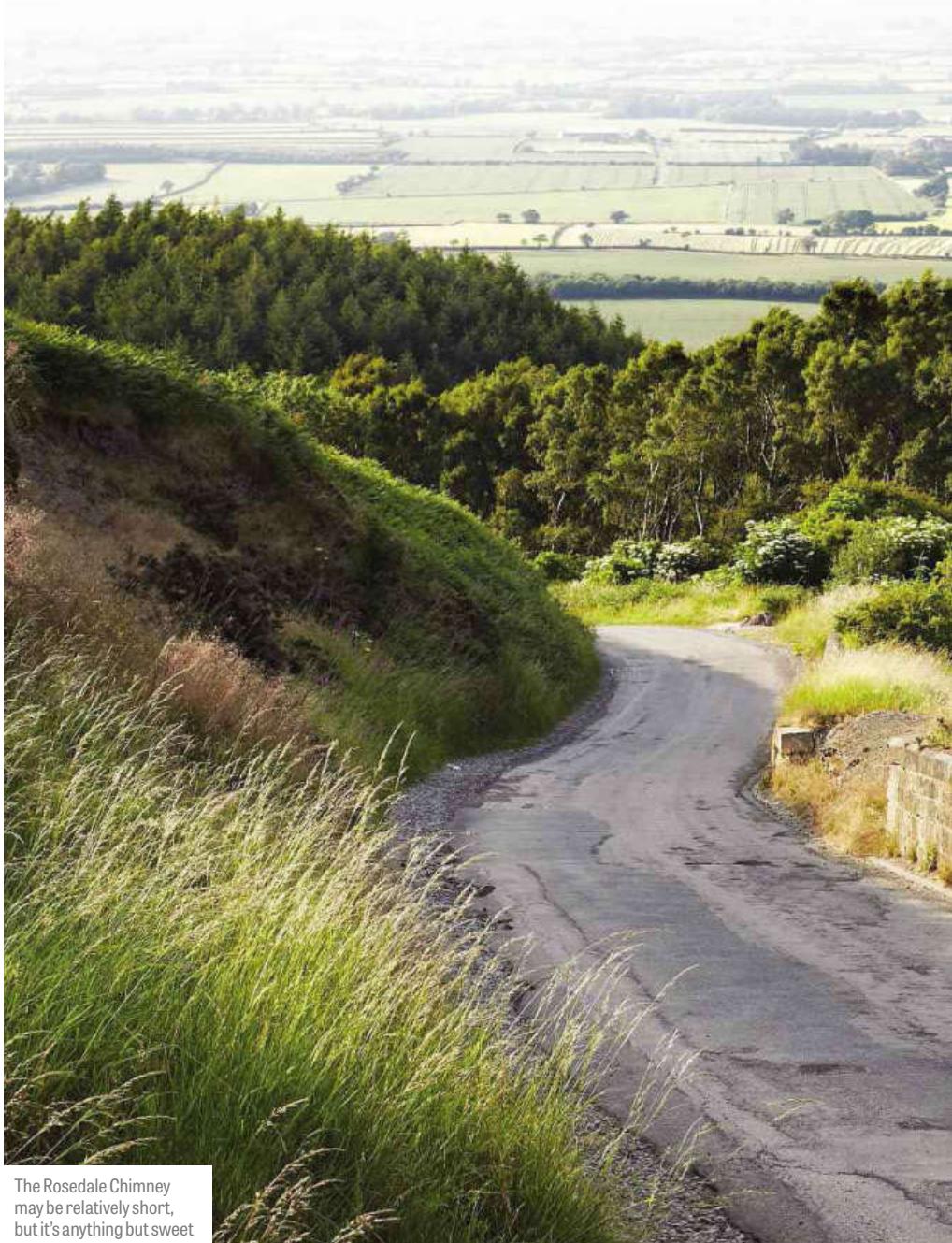
How do I get there?

You'll need a car to get to Rosedale – there's no train station in the village. An alternative option is to switch the starting point to the western edge of the route and take a train to Thirsk (about eight miles from the moors). Direct trains from London's King's Cross take around two and a half hours.

What's the route like?

This is a hilly circular route that winds its way through idyllic lanes, over rolling moorland and up no fewer than 12 climbs. Three of these feature in Simon Warren's book *100 Greatest Cycling Climbs*, which roughly translates as being super steep and pretty painful, so prepare for a leg-crushing, lung-busting workout. You have been warned!

THE INFAMOUS ROSEDALE CHIMNEY LASTS ONLY 1,430M BUT FEATURES GRADIENTS IN EXCESS OF 30%



The Rosedale Chimney may be relatively short, but it's anything but sweet

Tell me about the climbs?

The first is the infamous Rosedale Chimney Bank, just a few metres from the start with a maximum gradient in excess of 30%. And while it may only last 1,430m, it leaves a lasting impression.

The second big challenge, White Horse Hill, comes at around 50km. If Rosedale Chimney is a 10/10 for difficulty, this is a 7/10. The road is a wiggly, wooded climb with sections of 25% that leads to a glider station.

With 74km to go, there's a lot of up and down left to ride, with the most aggressive climb being Carlton Bank. This one gains around 200m of elevation over 2km – an average gradient of 10%. It boasts a rough road surface and a vertical drop to your left, but you are rewarded with stunning views of Cringle Moor.

Is there any flat?

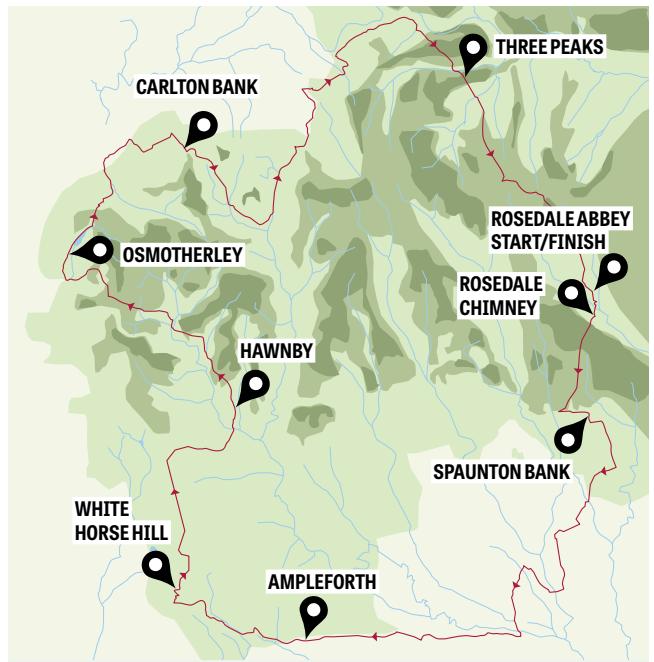
Yes, but not a lot. With a total elevation of 2,233 metres over the 130km route, the climbs aren't particularly long, just very steep. The longest upward slog is the 4.5km drag just after the town of Castleton. With sections of 20% it's the last sting in the tail before a glorious 5km decent back to Rosedale Abbey.

Where's the café stop?

There are plenty... The first is the White Horse Farm Inn (whitehorserosedale.co.uk), located a quarter of the way up Rosedale Chimney. The aptly named Tea Room in Hawnby (hawnbytearoom.co.uk) comes around halfway into the ride and the Coffee Pot café in Osmotherley (thecoffeepot-osmotherley.co.uk), 15km further up the road, serves enormous baguettes with delicious fillings and makes an ideal lunch stop.

What about the road surface?

Honestly, it's all over the place. Expect lots of patches of distressed tarmac, gravel and mud – especially the Carlton Bank section.



THE MOOR THE MERRIER

Follow the North Yorks trail

GPS DOWNLOAD cyclist.co.uk/14moors

- 1 Head south from Rosedale Abbey, and up Rosedale Chimney Bank.
- 2 After 5.5km, turn left towards Spaunton Bank.
- 3 Turn right onto the A170, then left onto Lime Rd.
- 4 Turn left in Little Edstone then right towards Great Edstone, taking the right as you leave the village.
- 5 Turn right onto Moor Lane, and left onto Ings Lane.
- 6 In West Ness turn right and right again onto Station Rd.
- 7 Turn right, then left to Oswaldkirk. Turn right towards White Horse Hill, left onto the A170, left onto Cleveland Rd, then right towards Hawnby.
- 8 Cross the A172, follow the loop, then turn left onto the main road.
- 9 Take the first right off it onto Bank Lane, then left onto Mill Lane and right onto Raisdale Road leading to the B1257.
- 10 Turn left, then after 6km, turn right towards Ingleby Greenhow.
- 11 Turn right towards Battersby, right towards Kildale, and right towards Westerdale. Turn right at the T-junction, then left for Rosedale Abbey.



Undulating, dense and yellowish green? It can only be the moors



Steep downhills, sharp bends, babbling brooks. Perfect!

Mind The App

Has the digital revolution really made riding any better? Matt Barbet on the Strava palaver...

→ I'm sitting in a French café, nursing a cold Kronenbourg and trying to connect my Garmin to the Wi-Fi. My cold fingers are struggling to input the *mot de passe*. My kit is sweaty from climbing over 2,500 metres in the mountains behind Nice, and I'm carrying the faint aroma of smoke from several early-Autumn bonfires I rode past. I've earned my beer, but now I want to upload my exploits. Why? Because if it's not on Strava, it never happened.

What a ridiculous sentence that is. It's not that long ago that cyclists would ride by feel, and numbers only appeared in front of them on road signs. Now, we crave metrics, whether it be kilometres ridden, metres climbed, or watts generated. A sprinkling of kudos on top doesn't go amiss either. It can make the beer taste just that little bit better, and why 100,000 people are signing up every week.

There's no doubt that the likes of Strava, MapMyRide, Cyclemeter and others have revolutionised the way we ride, and enhanced the experience. Not only have apps enabled me to log all my riding, and pore over my stats, they have let me enjoy roads I never would have found otherwise, by letting me see where others have ridden before. Of course, they have encouraged me to press harder when I'm on my own, thanks to segments – those invisible markers that determine which bit of road it is worth trying to push yourself on.

A 115km loop from home to Box Hill in Surrey is one of my regular rides. Box is also one of the most-ridden Strava sections in the world, with nearly 50,000 attempts logged, including some by the sport's biggest names during the 2012 London Olympics and the subsequent London-Surrey Classic. Don't tell me you wouldn't want to know how you fare against the best pros in the world. My best time is five minutes and 55 seconds, and you



know I wouldn't share it here if I wasn't fairly pleased with it! Still, it's over a minute behind segment leader Ian Bibby.

No harm in putting myself up against him, my mates, myself, or anyone else, you'd think (even the mysterious 'Banksy of Strava' called JP, who intermittently hoovers up titles when he feels like it). But it's not that straightforward. There are a few who go that bit too far, those who should be sectioned for chasing certain segments. No true King or Queen of the Mountain ever jumped lights or flew up a climb on a moped to just get three letters next to their name on a website. There's no glory in dying while chasing a time on a descent just because someone else put it on Strava – as American cyclist William Flint did in 2010.

It's worth remembering that in using any of these tools – indeed, any social network – you are giving away data that can then be monetised. Fine, I'm happy to do that, but what about those who earn a living by riding a bike? The data from pros is valuable, so will they keep on handing it over without getting something in return? The sport of cycling is looking very hard right now at how to generate more income rather than rely on a few wealthy benefactors and sponsors. Selling access to that data sits right alongside

Box Hill has nearly 50,000 attempts logged on Strava

selling footage from bike-mounted cameras. If weekend warriors want to lap it all up, they may end up paying for it.

Back on the Côte d'Azur and I'm cruising through Monaco in a bunch, on my way to Italy. Among us is a local legend. Jimmy is a lithe and nimble climber, known to all the pros who also call the tax haven home. He just happens to be 70 years old and only stopped racing a year ago.

Now, Jimmy is no Luddite. He has an SRM power meter on his top-notch Cervélo, and a second head-unit at home that's full up with rides. Talk inevitably turns to Strava, but Jimmy isn't on it. He reckons it would take

days to upload all his rides, but he doesn't feel the need. Decades of pedalling have put him in touch with minute details no technology or app could ever register.

We head up the Poggio, the iconic climb that comes near the end of one of the Monuments of racing, Milan-San Remo. In gradient and length, it's not dissimilar to Box Hill. I feel comfortable enough to push harder, knowing plenty of others will see my time when I upload this ride later. I'm younger than Jimmy's youngest child, but I can't drop him. He's as strong as an Ox.

Unlike my earlier humble brag, I don't need to share this. It doesn't show on my Strava profile, but it definitely did happen. I can't see Jimmy's figures, but I have the memory. While Strava offers a different, fun dimension to riding, the wind on my face, the sweat on my forehead and the fire in my legs are really the only things that can make me actually feel like a King. ☺



In between stints presenting the news on Channel 5, Matt Barbet indulges in his passion for cycling by heading up ITV4's *The Cycle Show*

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If the cyclist in your life has been nice this year, let them know you care with a present that'll help keep them rolling come the New Year. And if they haven't been nice, why not just something that'll get them out of the house! From fun stocking fillers under a tenner to high-tech gadgets and money-no-object dream bikes, we'll steer you through gifts for every cyclist and every budget.



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Design Lara Evans

Photography Jenni Leskinen, Henry Carter, Adrian Catalin-Volscinschi

GIFTS
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£10



CONO SUR BICICLETA PINOT NOIR

It's wine, it's got a bicycle on the front – as if we needed more of an excuse. Like the *BikesEtc* team, this young pinot noir is both cheap and delicious.

Price: £7 Contact: conosur.com

NUUN ACTIVE HYDRATION TABLETS
Pop one of these in your water bottle and it'll not only taste better but the electrolytes will help you hydrate more efficiently.
Price: £6 (tube of 12) Contact: nuun.co.uk

FABRIC WATER BOTTLE
De-clutter your bike with this clever cageless bottle. Dispensing with the traditional cage, instead a pair of studs keep it locked in place.
Price: £10
Contact: fabric.cc

VELOPAC PHONEPAC
A tiny price to insure hundreds of pounds worth of smart phone against a soggy fate, this simple plastic pouch comes in a wide range of designs.
Price: £6 Contact: velopac.cc

BIRZMAN TYRE LEVERS
A perfect stocking filler, these levers are among the sturdiest we've found and in this neon green they're unlikely to accidentally get left on the roadside.
Price: £3 (set of three) Contact: i-ride.co.uk

CYCLECHIC CLASSIC PUNCTURE REPAIR KIT
Cheaper than the average replacement tube, the neat metal tin alone is worth the fiver this retro repair kit will set you back.
Price: £4.95 Contact: cyclechic.co.uk



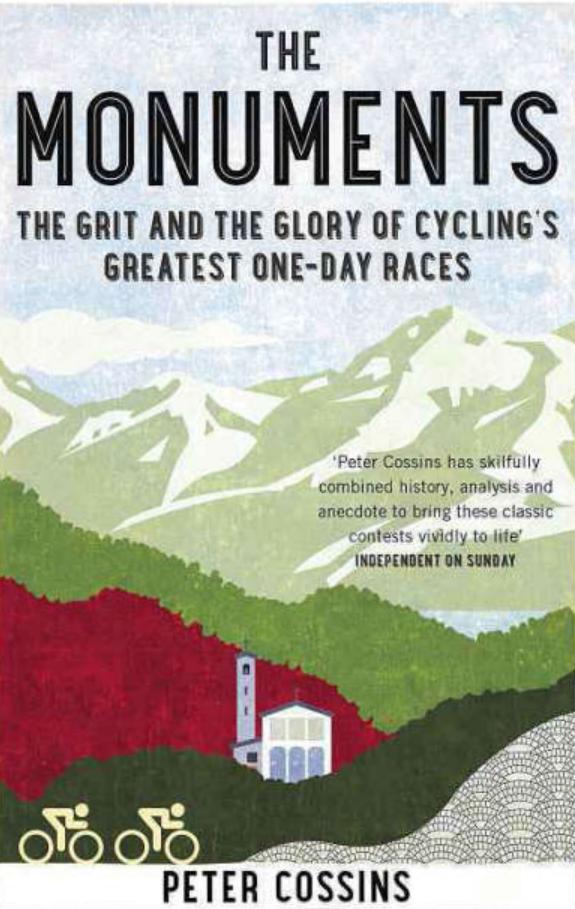
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DEFEET & MORVÉLO SOCKS

Unimaginative perhaps but no one resents receiving a nice pair of socks. Go loud with polka dots and shocking pink or stick to something subtler.

Price: £9-10 Contact: i-ride.co.uk/morvelo.com

**THE MONUMENTS BY PETER COSSINS**

Explore racing beyond the Grand Tours with this history of Europe's brutal one-day Classic races from Paris-Roubaix to Il Lombardia.
Price: £29.99 Contact: bloomsbury.com

**PARK TOOL BO-2C BOTTLE OPENER**

Made to Park Tool's exacting standards and sporting the same blue livery, this tool is likely the most important in the pro mechanic's arsenal.
Price: £7.99 Contact: madison.co.uk

**ASS SAVER MUDGUARD**

Give the gift of a slightly less wet bum – this will protect your posterior from the spray thrown up by the back wheel.
Price: £6.50 Contact: ass-savers.com

**GREEN OIL CHAIN LUBE**

The ideal Secret Santa gift for the office eco-warrior, this biodegradable lube is tough on grime but gentle on the environment.
Price: £5.99 Contact: i-ride.co.uk

**PANIAGUA EPO COFFEE**

Dose yourself with this cheekily named (but UCI-legal) Guatemalan espresso blend. Finished in a vintage Probat roaster, it'll impress even the most ardent coffee snobs.
Price: £7.50 Contact: paniagua.cc

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**FONDERIE ROGER
HAND-PAINTED FIGURINE**

Perfect for big kids, these French-made cast figurines can be custom-painted to match your favourite jersey or resurrect a rider from the past.
Price: £11 each Contact: cyclingSouvenirs.com

**CAPSULAR P1 CASE**

A survival pod for your folding money and phone, this case may be chunky but it will see off even the heaviest downpours.

Price: £25 Contact: capsular.myshopify.com

**FIZIK SUPERLIGHT GLOSSY FLUORO BAR TAPE**

Used sparingly, a dash of fluoro can liven up any bike and help you beat the winter blues. Fizik makes some of the loudest shades available.

Price: £15.99 Contact: extrauk.co.uk

**LEZYNE FEMTO LIGHT SET**

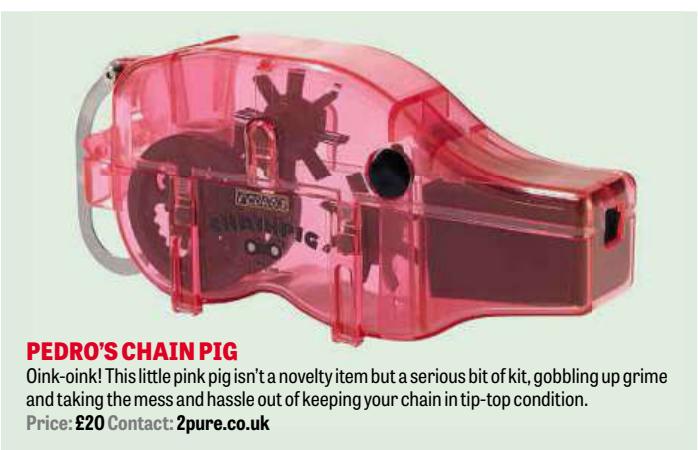
Small but punchy, these are bright enough for commuting or can be kept in reserve should your main light run out of juice mid-ride.

Price: £21.99 Contact: upgradebikes.co.uk

**ARUNDEL STAINLESS BOTTLE CAGE**

The peloton's choice when the spring Classics roll around, this won't let go of your bidons regardless of the conditions.

Price: £20 Contact: saddleback.co.uk

**PEDRO'S CHAIN PIG**

Oink-oink! This little pink pig isn't a novelty item but a serious bit of kit, gobbling up grime and taking the mess and hassle out of keeping your chain in tip-top condition.

Price: £20 Contact: 2pure.co.uk

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RAPHA VAN

The dreaded 'broom wagon', used to sweep up straggling riders during high mountain stages of the Tour. Employed since 1910, the Citroen H-Van is its most iconic incarnation.

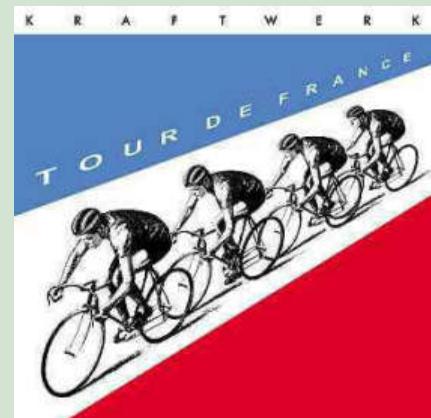
Price: £25 Contact: rapha.cc

**CARRADICE MALHAM MUSETTE**

Designed to carry a rider's lunch, this dapper canvas and leather musette is just as at home being toted around town as being handed out mid-race.
Price: £25 Contact: carradice.co.uk

**CHAPEAU CHAMOIS CREAM**

Show you care by ensuring your paramour's privates are adequately protected. Available in fresh-smelling original or menthol, for perverts.
Price: £11.99 Contact: chapeau.cc

**TOUR DE FRANCE BY KRAFTWERK, VINYL LP**

Far and away the best Krautrock concept album dedicated to the Tour de France, from Germany's cycling-obsessed man machines.
Price: £18 Contact: parlophone.co.uk

**MODEL ROAD SIGN**

These way markers are dotted up the side of Europe's major cols. Pretend you've ridden them all by strategically placing these miniaturised versions around your desk.
Price: £15 Contact: cyclingsouvenirs.com

**CLUG ROADIE WALL MOUNT**

Stick 'em up, punk. This minimalist wall mount supply enough bite to pin your bike to the wall, liberating precious floor space.
Price: £16 Contact: getclug.com

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DHB BLOK MESO JERSEY

This striking jersey has a fleece lining to keep you warm through winter, and a zipped rear pocket to look after your valuables too.

Price: £45 Contact: wiggle.co.uk



MUC-OFF 8-IN-1 BICYCLE CLEANING KIT

Make sure your bike is immaculately turned out with this complete grooming kit that comes in a neat storage tub.

Price: £40 Contact: muc-off.com



FABRIC LINE SADDLE

Saddle choice is a personal matter – everyone's behind is unique. That said, we can't see many riders being bummed out with this moderately priced but extremely comfortable perch.

Price: £39.99 Contact: fabric.cc



CASTELLI COFFEE CUPS

What the Italians don't know about coffee isn't worth knowing. At least make sure yours is served correctly with these stylish espresso cups.

Price: £35 Contact: castellicafe.co.uk



BROOKS MT21 MULTI-TOOL

A rarity among multi-tools in that it includes a knife. Ideal for dividing wheels of brie or carving your name into a tree trunk

Price: £49.99 Contact: extrauk.co.uk



WAHOO TICKR HEART RATE MONITOR

Paired to a compatible smartphone, this clever feature-packed strap will harvest heart rate data, seamlessly syncing it to Strava or other online tracking services.

Price: £49.99 Contact: wahoofitness.com

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GIRO FORAY HELMET

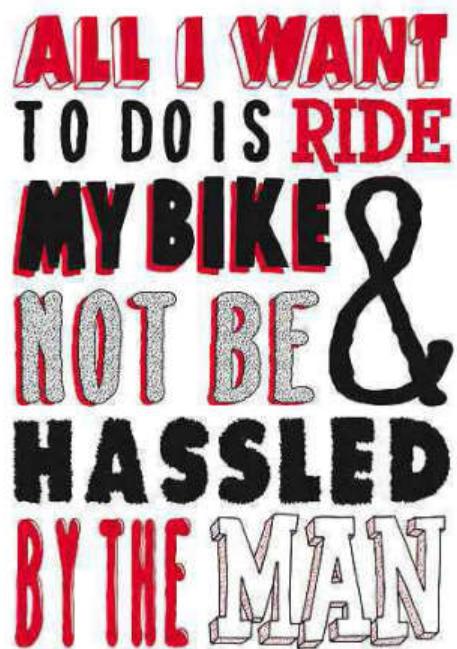
This helmet could easily be mistaken for one costing twice the price. Perfect for those on a tight budget or who crash regularly.

Price: £49.99 Contact: zyro.co.uk

**HOWIES LIGHT MERINO BASE LAYER**

Made of wool from happy New Zealand sheep, this base layer will also keep you happy thanks to its awesome thermal and odour-eating properties.

Price: £45 Contact: howies.co.uk

**DONHOU PRINT**

Amen to that. Stick it to the man with this limited-edition hand-made two-colour screen print from designer Gus Farnes.

Price: £35 Contact: donhoubicycles.com

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Price: £30 Contact: sustrans.org.uk

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Price: £34 Contact: stitchmilane.co.uk

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There's no point winning your event only to leave the person presenting the bouquet retching. Freshen up quickly with this essential race day kit.

Price: £49.99 Contact: secret-training.cc

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FROG TEAM SKY KIDS' KIT

Make sure your own mini pro is properly equipped with this kit in their favourite team colours – gloves (£8), bottle cage (£12), saddlepack (£12) and helmet (£26).

Price: £58 Contact: frogbikes.com



GARMIN VARIA LIGHT

Paired to a compatible Edge computer, this smart light not only adjusts to changing light conditions but will also alert drivers when you're slowing down.

Price: £60 Contact: garmin.com



MORVÉLO BLENDER JERSEY

There's no chance of hiding in the bunch when you wear this unapologetically loud jersey. For the truly brave, there are matching shorts with the same all-over print.

Price: £60 Contact: morvelo.com



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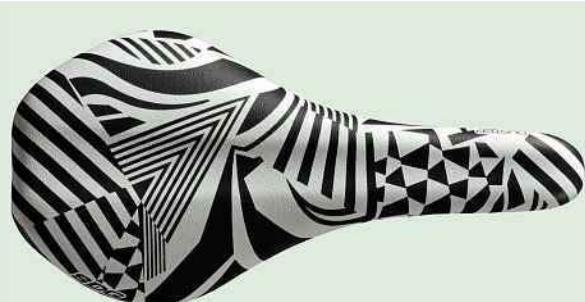
Price: £54.98 Contact: bikesetc.co.uk



RIDE LONDON SPORTIVE

Each July, thousands of riders take over the roads of London and Surrey. Entry to this must ride event is by ballot which closes on 8th January.

Price: £58 Contact: ridelondon.co.uk



SDG DUSTER SADDLE

This saddle scored highly in a recent review. It's available in more muted colours but we love this bonkers dazzle camo livery.

Price: £69.95 Contact: silverfish-uk.com

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The perfect introduction to clipless, these lightweight composite pedals share many traits with pricier models, including adjustable release tension.
Price: £59.99 Contact: madison.co.uk



OGIO RUCK 22 BACKPACK

Be the coolest kid in class when term time rolls around again with this neat cycling backpack, which features dedicated housing for a laptop or tablet.
Price: £54.99 Contact: madison.co.uk



GIRO AMBIENT CITY GLOVES

These natural leather gloves are a cut above in the sartorial stakes. Water- and wind-resistant, they're as practical as they are handsome looking.
Price: £59.99 Contact: zyro.co.uk



GORE BIKE WEAR WINDSTOPPER SOFTSHELL OVERSHOES

Give the gift of warm toes. In this fluoro colour, these windproof and water-resistant booties will also help you stand out when the weather turns grey.
Price: £59.99 Contact: goreapparel.co.uk



GALIBIER MISTRAL FOUL WEATHER JACKET

This great looking softshell jacket should laugh off even the grimmiest weather. Constructed of German-made three-layer fabric, its high-end styling belies its budget pricing.
Price: £75
Contact: galibier.cc

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RIDGEBACK SCOOT KIDS' BIKE

The most laterally stiff yet vertically compliant scooter bike on the market. Start your litt'luns off on the right road with this awesome balance bike.

Price: £100 Contact: ridgeback.co.uk



LEZYNE ALLOY DIGITAL DRIVE ABS2 FLOOR PUMP

With its cast alloy base and wooden handle this modish pump is far too nice to banish to the cupboard under the stairs.

Price: £80 Contact: upgradebikes.co.uk



BONT RIOT SHOES

Heat-mouldable shoes with a carbon soles for a hundred quid? While not exactly cheap, these shoes are incredible value – plus they just look fast.

Price: £100 Contact: saddleback.co.uk



CATEYE VOLT 800 LIGHT

Light up the night with this 800-lumen front light. With a range of settings to maximise battery life, it's equally ideal for commuting or winter training.

Price: £99.99
Contact: zyro.co.uk



PARK TOOL PSC9 WORK STAND

A must-have for any aspiring mechanic, repairs will instantly become a whole lot easier with this sturdy work stand holding your bike in place.

Price: £100 Contact: madison.co.uk



CYCLEHOOP SHELF STAND

This heavy-duty folded metal shelf won't just keep hold of your bicycle, it'll also provide easy storage for accessories such as helmets and locks.

Price: £80 Contact: cyclehoop.com



GIFTS
UP TO
£150



GARMIN EDGE 25 GPS COMPUTER

A small computer that's big on functionality. Syncing to a range of sensors, it'll also keep you on track with downloadable courses via the Garmin Connect app.

Price: £140 **Contact:** garmin.com

**GEOFF WAUGH 20IN X 30IN ARCHIVE PRINT**

Geoff has been chasing the peloton for years. Check out his website – small prints start at £10, or go big to do his evocative images justice.
Price: £150 Contact: waughphotos.com

**TRAKKE BAIRN MINI MESSENGER BAG**

Hand-making its bags to order in Glasgow, Trakke is so serious about its hippy eco credentials it'll even sell you a matching yurt for an additional £4,500.
Price: £125 Contact: trakke.co.uk

**RAPHA JEANS**

You can't beat a bit of Rapha and these cycling jeans – complete with quick-drying elastane denim and reflective tabs on the turn-ups – demonstrate why.
Price: £150 Contact: rapha.cc

**KRYPTONITE NEW YORK FAHGETTABOUDIT CHAIN**

This is like leaving your bike with its own bodyguard. Not actually made of Kryptonite though, so in theory Superman could nab it.
Price: £130 Contact: madison.co.uk

**HOY VULPINE RANDA SOFTSHELL JACKET**

The latest collaboration between bona fide national treasure Sir Chris Hoy and clothing maker Vulpine is this stylish take on the classic softshell jacket.
Price: £115 Contact: vulpine.cc

GIFTS
UP TO
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ASHMEI SOFTSHELL JACKET

Despite its retro chic, this jacket is super modern. Its cutting-edge design keeps the elements off your back while making sure the rest of you stays cool.

Price: £210 Contact: ashmei.com

**LAZER Z1 HELMET**

OK, so it's a bit pricey for a humble hat but just look at it – this lid wouldn't look out of place in Tate Modern.

Price: £200 Contact: madison.co.uk

**FEEDBACK SPORTS SPRINT WORK STAND**

We all need a work stand in our life and this one's ideal if your bike is awkward to clamp – it's more flexible than a double-jointed yoga teacher.

Price: £250
Contact: 2pure.co.uk

**GIRO EMPIRE SHOES**

Lace-up cycling shoes aren't just for retro poseurs. With a carbon sole and serious price tag, these kicks are anything but stuck in the past.

Price: £230
Contact: zyro.co.uk

**OAKLEY JAWBREAKER CAVENDISH PRIZM**

As Oakley says, these shades have 'everything from surge ports to Unobtanium components for a secure fit'. More importantly, they look damn cool.

Price: £190
Contact: oakley.com



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GO PRO HERO4 BLACK

This ridiculously powerful action camera is perfect for catching all the excitement from your rides. With stills mode and 4k video, they'd best be epic!

Price: £410

Contact: madison.co.uk



GARMIN EDGE EXPLORE 1000 GPS COMPUTER

It'll plan your routes and rides, show you fun new places, and won't borrow money off you. Possibly the perfect travelling companion.
Price: £350
Contact: garmin.com



EXPOSURE LIGHTS SIX PACK MK6

Jammed with tech and possibly magic, these are brighter – and smarter – than Brian Cox and Stephen Hawking's love child. Well flash.
Price: £400 Contact: ultimatesportengineering.com



ELITE MUIN TRAINER

Clever bit of kit this that allows you to remove your back wheel and plug your bike directly into the trainer, offering equal parts silence and stability.
Price: £500 Contact: madison.co.uk



JUST RIDING ALONG, JRA JAWBONE LITE WHEELSET

Lacing by hand, JRA creates custom hoops tailored to your budget and riding style, or you can customise stock wheels with coloured nipples and decals.
Price: £380 Contact: justridingalong.com



SIDI WIRE CARBON VERNICE SHOES

Wearing the shoes that clad Chris Froome's feet on the way to victory in the Tour de France, you'll have one less excuse come race day.
Price: £300 Contact: saddleback.co.uk

GIFTS
UP TO

£1,000



SATURAE C50 WHEELSET

A carbon clincher wheelset that delivers a silky smooth ride with a classy, understated look. Wheels to make other wheels weep.

Price: £800 Contact: saturae.com



CAMPAGNOLO ATHENA 11-SPEED CARBON GROUPSET

Has your bike been good this year? Why not treat it to this awesome carbon groupset? After all, Christmas is a time for giving.

Price: £789 Contact: chickencycles.co.uk



3T VENTUS II LTD AERO BAR

This reboot of the bars that helped Cancellara win gold at the Beijing Olympics are 15% lighter than the original. So they should make you faster than him. In theory.

Price: £919 Contact: i-ride.co.uk

PARK TOOL PK65 PROFESSIONAL TOOL KIT

It's got everything – literally, everything – you will ever need to fix any part of your bike ever. And possibly your washing machine.

Price: £950

Contact:
madison.co.uk



SCICON AEROTECH EVOLUTION CASE

Badass design, durability and superb functionality make this the daddy of hard bike cases. If Batman had a Batcycle, he'd shift it around Gotham City in this.

Price: £675 Contact: saddleback.co.uk



POWERTAP P1 PEDAL POWER METER SET

Clever pedals that take you one step closer to cyborg status by essentially plugging you into your bike and measuring how much power you generate.

Price: £1,000 Contact: paligap.cc

GIFTS
UP TO

£2,500



TACX NEO SMART TRAINER

Its software allows you to ride real-world courses from the safety of your garage!

It's got a cool training light device!

It (possibly) comes from the future!

Price: £1,200 Contact: fisheroutdoor.co.uk

**ROCKET R58 ESPRESSO MACHINE**

Coffee is rocket fuel for cyclists. You can have a Nescafé or you can do it properly. This is what properly looks like. Price: £1,699 Contact: rocket-espresso.com

BROMPTON SUPERLIGHT CUSTOM FOLDING BIKE

It doesn't look much like a road bike but it's no slouch when you put the power down, especially if you drop some additional cash along with a chunk of weight by ticking the titanium ultra-light box on the order form.

Price: from £1,385
Contact: brompton.com

**LA FUGA FULLY INCLUSIVE CYCLING TOURS**

Take the hassle out of cycling holidays with a level of support usually reserved for the pros, or sign up for events such as the Ventoux Sportive and take on the legendary Giant of Provence (above). Price: from £1,499 Contact: lafuga.cc

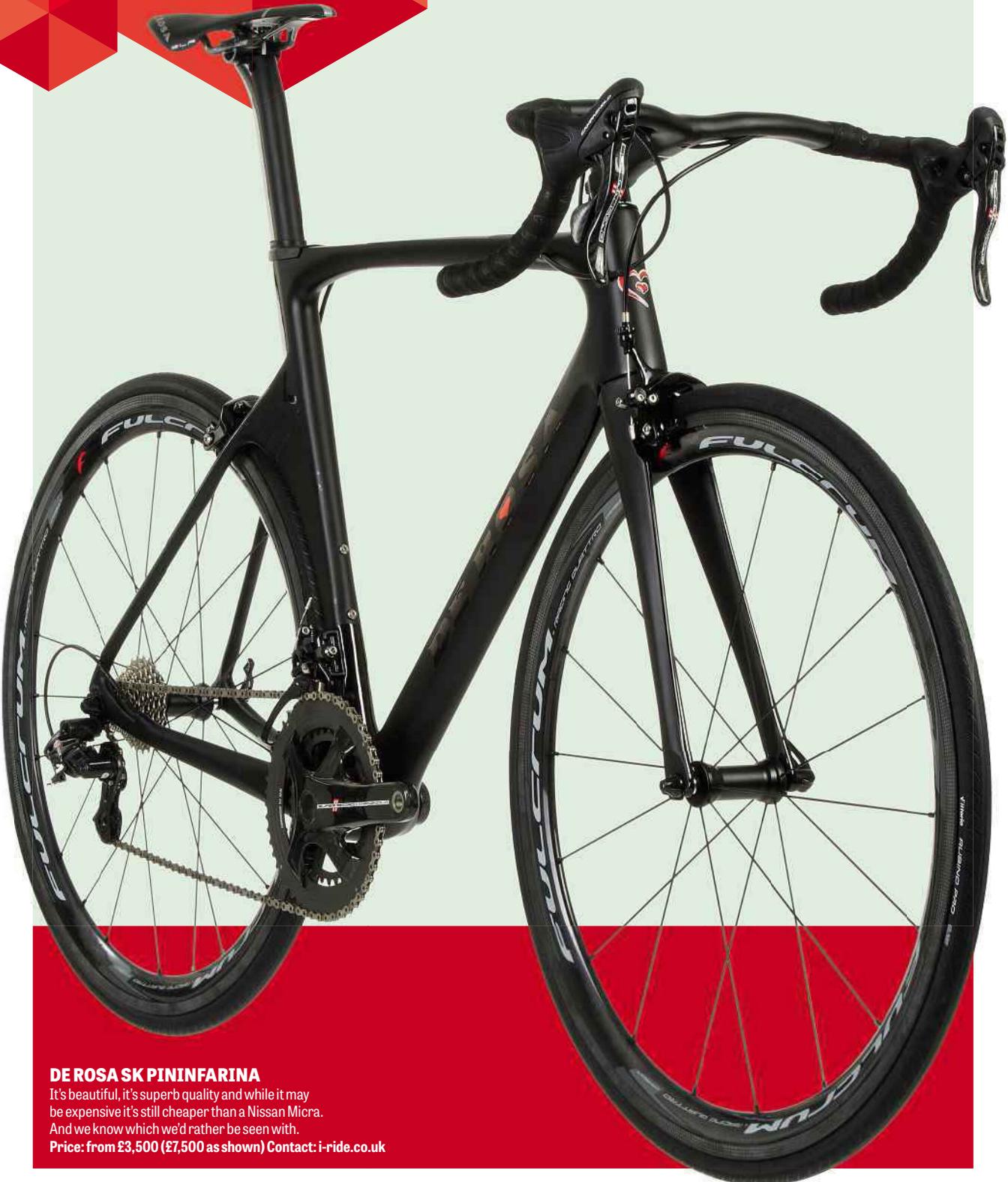
RITCHEY CARBON BREAK-AWAY FRAME KIT

Light, stiff and durable with classic geometry, this is a thoroughbred designed to build your dream bike around – and it packs down into a suitcase for travel! Price: £2,475 Contact: paligap.cc

**FAST FORWARD F9R CARBON WHEELS**

These will make any bike look amazing – but best not stick them on something out of the Argos catalogue, eh? Price: £1,740 Contact: paligap.cc

MONEY NO OBJECT



DE ROSA SK PININFARINA

It's beautiful, it's superb quality and while it may be expensive it's still cheaper than a Nissan Micra. And we know which we'd rather be seen with.

Price: from £3,500 (£7,500 as shown) Contact: i-ride.co.uk



**SPORTIVE THERMAL
ROUBAIX JERSEY**

Thermal, reflective details,
mesh panels and gripper hem

MADISON

Welcome to the road. It's you versus your route.
Always challenge your limits. Each pedal stroke, every
breath, brings you closer to your goal. Redefine your best.

Make it personal with Madison Clothing.

**PERSONAL
GAINS**



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A VERSATILE STRIP OF SAFETY.



THE STRIP DRIVE PRO REAR

The new Strip Drive Rear and Strip Drive Pro Rear are highly versatile, boasting five premium LED's with multiple, extremely visible, flash and output modes up to 100 lumens! It's unique co-molded lens/body design makes it compatible with regular seatposts and aero seat posts or frame shapes. A durable, waterproof construction provides ultimate protection in all weather conditions. The integrated USB stick makes recharging effortless. Enhanced with MOR Optics, side visibility and Mode Memory, this is the ultimate rear safety LED.

Strip Drive Front or Rear SRP £29.99 | Strip Drive Pro Rear SRP £39.99

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